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EDITORIAL

REASSESSMENT

An inspiriting feature of the spring lists now being issued by publishers is the number of classical works due to appear shortly at popular prices. This may or may not indicate a demand for these classics, but their long overdue appearance (many of them having been out of print since 1940) should certainly stimulate a demand among readers who are already familiar or half-acquainted with them and students approaching them for the first time.

In these columns we are interested exclusively in poetry which however is so important an element of literature—possibly its nucleus—that we shall not be unjustified in considering the significance to the reading public of new editions of established literary works, whether they be poetry or prose. Few readers form an entirely original and uninfluenced opinion of literature even at their initial experience of it, and that is because introductions to literature are usually effected to the accompaniment of parenthetical whispers, as it were, of qualification, defence, modification or censure, from the educator. Thus, we come to believe that we know instinctively the important aspects of literature, that we in turn can direct our disciples toward the estimation of the phrase, the line and the work as a whole (and in directing them we deal not only with the author but his critic). But one of the most outstanding attributes of a great work of art is its polygonal quality; whatever section of time it faces, a fresh type of excellence may become apparent which in no way detracts from the value of those facets which have been recognised and celebrated in the past.

It is possible that the too ready acceptance of established precepts may be one of the causes of the inertia which is afflicting the creative writer of to-day. We must admit the fact that the first half of the twentieth century has been a comparatively barren period in the history of world literature; the poet has for the past forty years wandered in a wilderness which he names Transition and only occasionally has he glimpsed the merest mirage of a Promised Land. Is it, perhaps, that his progress is retarded by his reference, perforce, to outdated maps, and if so, should we not encourage surveyors to chart constantly the changing surface of the literary landscape? If a widespread awareness and appreciation of literature is to be stimulated we need such surveyors but we shall not find them until the modern student acquires the will and ability to reassess the existing assessments of literature and until the Classics-at-popular-prices brigade are not only persuaded to read the books they buy but to discuss them, considering, rightly or wrongly, whether the value of the material they read remains faithful to past conceptions—the act of consideration seems to us to be of greater moment than the conclusions arrived at.

In a letter to the *Monthly Repository,* dated October, 1832, John Stuart

Mill wrote, "A man who knows may tell me what he knows as far as words go, and I may learn to parrot it after him; but if I would *know* it, I must place my mind in the same state in which he has placed his; I must make the thought my own thought; I must verify the fact by my own observation, or by interrogating my own consciousness."
and again,

"Those studies which only train the faculties, and produce no fruits obvious to the sense, are fallen into neglect . . . Is it any wonder that, thus educated, we should decline in genius?" Written 116 years ago, these words seem more applicable than ever.

We must never forget too, that a cataclysmic event like the Renaissance was brought about by a series of incidents which though disconnected from each other and not separately significant, forced humanity to discuss and discover new artistic values and coincided to form the marvellous upwelling of creative impulse that reached its height in the seventeenth century: the Turks captured Constantinople and so the students fled across Europe with their books: Caxton set himself up as a printer in the Almonry at Westminster: political and ecclesiastical changes took place throughout Europe. It was then that the spirit of Reassessment was abroad but it has not survived the changing values of subsequent generations.

If we in this age of indifference were to direct our intellectual energies to the reconsideration of world literature, from the very first manuscript and to set an example of exploration to the utmost limits of our ability, we might well contrive the inception of a second Renaissance. New findings in psychology alone offer countless possibilities of analytical adventure to the critic who has the necessary knowledge and whose mind is not infested with doctrines. Be that a wild dream as it may, we would nevertheless at least assert our identity as an Age of Reassessment to a relentless and possibly scornful posterity.

Present-day society needs both assessors and reassessors, and the difference between the two functions is as important as it is infinite. Lord David Cecil (upon whose work Mr. Derek Stanford will be writing comprehensively in the next issue of *The Poetry Review*) is however an outstanding example of a writer who is both assessor and reassessor, as is also Mr. Herbert Read. An example of an outright reassessor is Mr. W. P. Witcutt whose psychological study of Blake is of immense worth alike to literature and psychology. By far the most notable example of a reassessor is Mr. T. S. Eliot the practical entirety of whose work constitutes an inestimably valuable reassessment of literature; the extent of Mr. Eliot's influence upon poetry and poets is an indication of how the desire to create may thus be stimulated and maintained.

MURIEL SPARK.

ODE

BY

HUGO MANNING

So loud with pain, it was a tuneless season;
From the watch-tower by the bridge bad omens were seen.
In the woods through the night the wolves were howling,
By the wicked forge the dwarfs were plotting.
The squalls shook the girders, then struck down the towers,
The neighbours quarrelled, turned their cornfields crimson.
In the prophetic grove some wooed the future;
The ferry was frozen so none could cross.
There were others who prayed; still no miracles came
Until what the madmen had hoped for was all in vain.
So at eventide and the impasse life has declared
Like a hopeful lover wooing the dream of a future:
"Unless with you I may eat the bread of love,
Forever I'll wait unable to foretell failure,
In dolorous grove and by frozen mere.
O my love, sweet mother of my pain,
Moon, pharos, to my wandering fear,
The lovebird weeps for its mate again!"
Now over desert and mountain come the feathered fliers,
The swallows are stirring among the sheltering eaves.
Through the rushes by the marsh swarms awakening life,
The wordless choir haunts enchanted trees.
For the indivisible world harbouring terrestrial dance,
Must reveal the coming of ressurection and birth:
The answered prayer of the waiting womb,
The inchoate cry through the listening earth,
While the drummer desire without any end,
In the waiting muscle and the listening nerve,
Plucks the grape of love, peels the skin of shame,
Bursts like a chorus in the season's sea:
"Yes, I am the drummer desire without any end,
Buried in blood-seed for the cigarette life.
I am the recurring song in the breast of time,
In the alchemist well and the sprouting tree!"

THE DEATH OF ANTONIO TORRES HEREDIA, KNOWN AS "EL CAMBORIO"

Translated from the Poem by FREDERICO GARCIA LORCA

BY

ROY CAMPBELL

Voices of death along the river
Are heard. Old voices, croaking death,
Surround and trap the manly voice
With the carnations in its breath.
He bit the boots that kicked his ribs
With slashes of a tusky boar;
He bucked the soapy somersaults
Of dolphins, slithering in his gore;
He dyed in his opponents' blood
The crimson necktie that he wore,
But then there were four knives to one
So, in the end, he could no more.

* * *

When in the grey bull of the waters
Stars strike their javelins: in the hours
When yearling calves are softly dreaming
Veronicas of gillyflowers,
Voices of death reechoed screaming
Along that riverbank of ours.

* * *

"Antonio, of Camborio's clan,
Who have blue manes both thick and strong
With olive skins, like moonlight green,
And red carnations in their song,
Beside the Guadalquivir's shore,
Who took your life? Who could it be?"
"The Four Heredias, my Cousins,
The children of Benamejí.
Things that they did not grudge to others
Were things for which they envied me—
My boots of bright Corinthian hue,
My medals made of ivory,
And this fine skin wherein the olive
And jasmine both so well agree."

"Alas, Antonio el Camborio,
So worthy of an Empress high,
Remember now to pray the Virgin
Because you are about to die."
"Oh Frederico Garciá Lorca,
Go quickly while there's time, and raise
The Civil Guard: for I am wilting
And broken, like a stalk of maize.

* * *

He had three leakages of blood
And then, in profile, there he died—
Live currency of gold, whose like
Can never be again supplied.
A withered angel came and placed
A pillow underneath his head,
While others, with a weary flush,
Lit up a candle for the dead.
And when the four Heredia cousins
Back to Benameji had come,
Voices of death along the river
Ceased to be heard, and all was dumb.

DO I REMEMBER

BY

VIVIAN LOCKE ELLIS

Do I remember those summer hills,
And that exulting loveliness,
This wet November, do I remember
Those summer hills?
Or more the more do I remember them,
And less the less for all that chills
Do I forget.
And still, and yet,
The while I rake these embers for the flame,
Out of the amethyst and violet the flame
Spills as a flowering border spills
Over a spellbound path—the same
As on those summer hills.

TWO POEMS FOR A LUCKLESS SEASON

BY

ERIK DE MAUNY

Summer behind summer is the eternal snare
That takes us unawares. It is always more
Than sun's first rays on known or unknown shore:
The freckled phantom in spring's greening stare

Gives warning of an early and late disaster
Heroes who burned in love's historic fever
Transfixed upon the syllables of their faith
Have dreamed like us this weather lasts forever.

Winter is cruel but this bronze month is crueller
Trailing a mirage through the indifferent north.
The lover says: Bear me on your heart's broad river,
But tastes his own death on the loved one's mouth.

Lovers consumed in the same engulfing fire,
Dante or Abelard, be with me now . . .
The heart wears winter bravely as love's favour,
A kindness breaks it in the warmer weather.

★

To wander from you is always to return
As to escape is ever to run deeper
Into the subtle snare set long ago,
The cruel remnant of a crueller season . . .

Who sets or springs these unsuspected traps
Among innocent commerce of hands and eyes' glance,
And mines the sweet smooth highway of the tongue
Along the verges, under the waving flowers?

Better the naked rock and the thorned pathway . . .
A refugee upon a darkening earth
Within a diminishing return of days
And winter's unfleshed hunger his heart's truth.

TWO POEMS

BY

ALEX COMFORT

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

Pick upon pick in the sun at the sea edge
the prisoners sing and longer the raw trench
runs, and the hourglass white sand marks their time
and the tide treads its limits, flat as oil.

At night the sea falls sharper, the moon fills
their footprints up, and crowding from far out
the waves press earnestly on the streaming edge
of the wire-bright tidemark, and still the prisoners sing

while in their sleep the diggers' feet tread home

such voices over the wet sand and fields
as carry far inland, restless as a wheel
one long uneasy seaborne howl, the concourse
of voices worn by space to a wordless cry

a shadow of smoke that crosses fields at night
and the sleeping town that turns in its bed can catch
no words but the coming and going hum, the hands
that thunder on doors, o brothers, and is afraid

to hear the prisoners singing in the sea.

THE TRIBAL DEITIES

London, Berlin, Duty, Freedom, Order
to be preserved at any cost, black boots
on roads they do not know, polished but unwilling

there is snow on trees, on ponds, on the roofs and grass
even the railway makes no noise. Silent.

A city asleep has become unquiet as
a dead city. Snow fills these roofless rooms.
This silent world, this still, beautiful, world
is what they are trying to take from you

Hell has no fury like our citizenship
and Law and Order are its stone-headed prophets.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

BY

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

Verse was a mystery; each word a jewel,
deeply illumined, hard and blasphemous.
Whipped into song, dumb things grew clamorous,
fed a boy's fever with refining fuel.

The fever passed; the jewels he had strung
rattled like copper coins or beads of glass.
The orchids of his frenzy smelled like grass;
wall-paper peeled where unseen skies had hung.

But there was no return; he'd cursed the game
that sober men call life, and even dying
tragically was useless after his despair.

For years he lived in deserts, till his name
won glory long outgrown by one who, lying
on his death-bed, prayed for a dull man's prayer.

WILD-DEAR

(*After the German of Eduard Mörike*)

BY

HERBERT PALMER

What do they call her, the proud King's daughter?
"Wild-deer, ah Wild-dear!"
But what does she do through all the long day
That at sewing and spinning she will not stay?
"*Goes fishing and hunting.*"
"Oh, that I her gillie-man were!
For fishing and hunting drive away care
—Hush heart, still thy beating!"

But after a sidelong scheming while—
Wild-dear, fair Wild-dear—
The page rode over the castle-moat
In hunting boots and a hunting coat
To hunt with fair Wild-dear.
"If only—God's grace!—I a king's son were,
For when I'm with Wild-dear I'm treading the air
—Hush heart, still thy beating!"

They rested tongue-still 'neath an old gnarled oak
Till rippled with mirth fair Wild-dear spoke:
"Why dost thou stare in such ecstasy?
If thou hast the heart, boy, kiss thou me."
But the page shrank back—how courage ill-sits!—
Then thought, "I may do what her will permits."
And kissed fair Wild-dear full on the lips.
—Hush heart, still thy beating!

Silent at sunset rode they home—
Wild-dear, fair Wild-dear,
And the page who thought—did he understand?—
"But were she suddenly queen of the land
I'd shrink not an inch now.
For the wood is a billowing sea of bliss,
And the leaves are telling in amber mist
That I the sweet Wild-dear's mouth have kissed.
—Hush heart, still thy beating!"

SUNSHINE IN WINTERTIME

BY

GERALDINE KALKA CASH

After the days and the nights in the sodden meadow
Of grief, I am sudden a flower expanding, extending
In the piercing warmth of your exultation.
After the nights and the days in the sodden meadow
Of grief, I am suddenly emerald spear-points
And saffron-tinged lance-tips; am diamond chalices,
Amethyst-studded imperial cups of delight.

Now I am crocuses watching on winter-wide river banks,
Hearkening the torrent's hoarse tumult intent on the sea.
I, become crocuses waiting on winter-wide river banks,
Am quivering, reft by desire to be borne now
On tumult of white, roaring waters
And headlong in sunlight race into the sea;
Torrent's harsh music resolved on the dominant,
Seas sapphire murmur asway with sun's cadence
And carpeted over with crocuses snow-white and golden,
Purple and saffron, aswing on the swell of the tide.

EARTH PUSHES UP THE FROSTED WINDOW

BY

GLORIA KOMAI

Earth pushes up the frosted window, leans
Bare-elbowed; hyacinths blue growing sky;
Bends over brimming April tub, spring-cleans,
White lilac hanging in the sun to dry:
Bright household, brassy marigolds, velvet
Bumble-bee wallflowers; she fills clear days
Like crystal bowls with cut roses scarlet,
Extravagant her honeysuckle ways:
Lavishes plums, pears, apples, grapes, peaches
Ripe as her rounded cheeks (in winter rough
But now blooming); full-lipped, avid, reaches
For rich prizes of harvest; grasses tough
And tested will stand over you; teaches
Lovers that more will never be enough.

FIRST ALMOND

BY

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

O blood-bright blossom, have you come then so soon,
From the close conflict of night, clean sprung to the day,
With a cool gesture of beauty to restore my heart?

All branches were bare, but this achieves a spray,
Alone it was pricked in bud by the scalpel moon,
Alone its flower has formed to enchant my heart.

This blood will stream on the day in a rose-pink rune,
It moulds a jewel to glow in the sun's first ray,
Like pearl to shape on the tree, like love in my heart.

The night was secret and dark, dawn open and grey,
But here on a spray, so soon, is the Spring's first boon,
Her young glad gesture of beauty, waved to my heart.

ANNIVERSARY SONNET

BY

ARTHUR LEY

I tell my art abroad with humble pride,
Yet know, all others dead, I still would sing.
So I, when I am by my loved one's side,
Rejoice to hear her praised, yet ever cling
To our true world the world can never see.
My narrow heart's made rich by art, by love,
And both so like they never disagree
But in the one place marvellously move.
My formal art can never cage my dreams,
But rather springs them to a finer flower
That space would squander in a wilderness.
So with my love. All history, it seems,
Walks only in the compass of her power,
And constellations move in her caress.

DALILA

BY

T. W. RAMSEY

I would not have had him otherwise,
He was like a child,
I became a serpent, the snake awoke
In me when he smiled.

I received him silently in my silk
And velvet secret room;
If he had never spoken he
Would not have met his doom.

Which came through me from the fish god,
Mine is never the blame;
I cradled his huge dark head in my bosom,
My love burned without shame.

All the black of the Hebrew mischief
I melted in my white limbs,
Dark and lethargic dripped the wine
Of his strength as a cup brims

Too full of sweet for sacrifice
That bitter as gall must be;
But he laid the dark bar of his eyes
Heavily against me.

I loathed his slow words and the dark
Fire behind his eyes,
As I loved his arms and shoulders and hair
Curled for the sacrifice.

If he had never spoken
Or spoken at once in full
Fire should never have broken
The still, deep pool

Where I had looked with secret fear
And bitter longing too,
The terrible eyes so dark and clear
That only a little I knew.

So in the name of Dagon, I
  Drowned their waters in fire,
And in those warm tears satisfied
  For the first time all desire.

IN MY END, ALONE

BY

HARDIMAN SCOTT

Though love lies longing in the limbs,
Lives the pain in memory's wound,
Till lovers come with healing balm
And soothe the night away from harm
In one eternity, and round
The dark hours weave the light of limbs,
  In my heart I am alone.

Though lips pursuing the logic
Of caress need lips to murmur
Their delight, and the arms that frame
The pulsing breast need arms to claim
The moment's right, and the tremor
Of their passion no solemn trick,
  In my heart I am alone.

Though charity the beggar's key
Does need to unlock the spirit
Of despair, turn the ready heart,
And sympathy within its part
The sorrowed man to mourn, merit
Makes of these their duality;
  In my heart I am alone.

For neither the longing in limbs
That rest, nor the lips that search the heart's
Duress, nor hands that quick bestow
On beggars worth, can slowly grow
To truth, unless within my heart's
Caress alone have made their hymns,
  For in my end I am alone.

PAUL VALÉRY

BY

G. S. FRASER

Who knows what lasts, what crumbles? He,
While all the rest were talking, sat apart,
Indifferent to the noise of history
And the untutored message of the heart,

Indifferent to the pattern of the stars,
Kant was too simple there, and Pascal blind,
Their rhetoric was vague; but certain bars
Of music gave their measure to his mind,

And made him follow with a formal care
Some boyish problem of identity
Most of us thought of once. It led us where
We found it puzzling, so we let it be,

Why I am I, and yet another Me
Plays its escaping tricks? What I observe
Is never Me observing—can I see
What casts my shadows, while my shadows swerve?

One life was not too long to ponder that.
Perhaps there were no solids there at all
But shadows of a shadow on the flat
Expanse of nothing that was not a wall.

Stare long enough, the world itself can seem
Like some word children will go on and on
Repeating—"Oh, a dream, a dream, a dream!"
Is that word found in any lexicon?

Is it a word we have made up ourselves?
Perhaps we have made up the self with words,
There are too many books on all our shelves:
O self, my multiple conceptual birds!

Narcissus needed mirrors to be real
But choked in merging with reality,
The mind, a single nowhere, swoons to feel
Its multilocal multiplicity.

And, if we dream, the mind is not a glass,
But, like the sea, a blind and brutal thing,
Opaque and surly, clangorous as brass:
Waking's a standing pond in which we fling

Pebbles of thought to watch the ripples spread,
To watch the ripples vanishing away!
The night reminded him he would be dead
After the scrutability of day.

Sleeping reminded him that life begins
A sleepy thing, sweet with confused desires,
Mild teasing impulses that prick like pins;
He kindled to be kindled in these fires.

Life was a fruit, and meant to be consumed,
But how its sweetness melted in the mouth!
The formal image of a woman loomed
Through all the argument, to slake his drouth,

But only for a moment, let her sleep
And let him watch her there, and contemplate
Her as the primal Eve. And let her weep,
For she must wake, and he her world create,

He, the cold serpent of the intellect,
The stinging bee beside the pulpy fruit.
O let there be no mirrors to reflect
Reflection at the Tree of Wisdom's root!

Like skiffs, his poems peck upon that sea,
The great, opaque, the brassy sea, the blind:
And in my mouth melts his mortality.
The thoughtless clay has drunk the thinking kind.

THE LEGENDARY MAKER

BY

HERBERT CORBY

Climb the mean stairway with its mildewed walls.
The attic window probes into the sight
With chimney-stacks like loiterers, and the slates
Like slanting mirrors looking into night.
Against the horizon, like a bruise, dusk waits:
Beyond the falling railing, London falls.

The tent of room holds silence: the senses are still.
Our minds look through the window slyly to see
The sky where his mind roved at will through his eyes.
As though we have broken a trust the aspect should be,
As we peer at the diagonal heave of the roof to the skies:
Yet we glance out through day without any betrayal of will.

This is the room that heard his full grief, and so much:
—The coven of books, the cell of a passion, the old
Angers at justice selling out for a name:
This is the room that knew his laughter grow cold,
And his beaten spirit flicker and toss like a flame,
With none but the hard and dry beside him to touch.

The spirit, locked in these walls, was humble and sad;
Disaster, derided in others, happened at last:
None there to keep out the world and cancel his death.
The splendid rant and the pity, the pity was past,
The fury of beauty was ended, forsaken, and faith
Outside the window, turned and covered her head.

We stand by the wild yellow picture, and take
Into our hands the clamour and dross of his life.
His poems flow like negligent water down to the floor,
Decreasing our courage, lavender eyes of our grief.
There was freedom waiting, waiting outside the door,
And somewhere the sword is taken into the lake.

Somewhere the landfall promises islands of myrrh,
The princess in misery stoned to life by a kiss,
The blunted brambles shrivelling back like a beast:
Somewhere the voyage moons into music, but this
Is over the world's rim in some miraculous east:
Only the crayonned maps of the journey are here.

Here, by this stellar window in the sky,
We pillage the shimmering castles of his Troy,
With guilt fluttering at the window like a bird:
And what was the best of him we candidly destroy,
The loyal and the bitter, the moment he heard
Those marvellous voices persuading him to die.

Here in the high sloped room we have ended the whole.
Life had left behind the silken shreds of the dream,
But we burned them to ashes, crushed them to pages of dust
And none of the poems he made will be open to fame:
Our deed was too simple for praise, too bitter for trust.
We put out the eyes of his poems and murdered his soul.

Who says if we acted wisely? The poet is dead.
Shall life be less than the work, words more than the man?
We had the task, we had an honour to keep.
Shall ghosts return and be nailed to death by the rain?
His hymnal of beauty is weather shrouded in sleep,
And no one now shall recall those things of beauty he said.

So. Some shall come after to posture and crow,
But we killed his soul, leaving nothing free for the ghouls.
Fantastic, their lies will colour his life for the book,
With scorn deft for us, the ignorant killers of souls.
They will be vexed with envy and dread that we took
Away from their minds the denial of all they know.

His myth will scatter like incense over the earth.
We knew, when we killed his soul, the way these apes
Would chatter in their summer ignorance.
Let them build their legendary shapes
And bless the anonymous promises of chance,
Which, gold with garlands, gave a genius birth.

We are the watchers, the keepers of silence, the names
Spoken across the desert horizons by death:
We are the voices that talked in another room.
We knew him, loved him, we will not alter his myth,
But avert our eyes when the fabulous orchids bloom,
And leave you alone with your wrong and marvellous dreams.

WAITING AT BILSTON

BY

CYRIL HUGHES

Waiting at Bilston, and mist a subtle rising
Of death on death, my reason wonders
Why it is chilled with these bones,
Why each wreathing tongue speaks tense
Imagined horror of physical words.

It is known Bilston is dead—
All day facts like headstones have stood
Above marble voices and worm movement,
The landscape a black mourner,
Worn features, paradox of pain:
Our slain hands dig the coldest grave
For the rust of the proud body.

There is no rest in crying!
Circling, the trapped brain seeks outlet
In denying the rigid shroud of night
Wound round the flaked iron of pillars,
Sliding along the even steel of rails.

A porter scurries from dark to dark:
Reason is blasphemy and reminds
Here is no shadow wavering between houses
And slag-heaps towards desolation,
But the bright image of a god
That justifies a universe.
Mist, irrational one, swallows his sound.

My reason wonders, that the death of grass
Shrivels my roots, yet a man suffers
And I make no outcry!
Looking at times, do I see timelessness,
Condemnation of that individual star?

This cemetery is secured from grief:
There has been too much weeping
Where silence should be known.

If there be the usual distractions
In the neat darkness of these graves,
Pity is squandered, compassion
An inturned edge, dangerous only
To the heart of the compassionate.

O happy dead of Bilston, be assured, be calm!
The agonies of choice and growth forsworn,
Remain the level days and nights
Of inarticulate eternity,
Where naked loneliness shall not assail
Your still, unchanging certainties—
This blessed plateau underneath no sky,
This solid earth, tremulous with mist,
Hurt of excessive laughter, your forgotten tears.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

BY

T. M. AULD

This is the Son of Man; the first of these
triumphant Sons of God, Time's conquerors
who move from dawn to midnight, avatars
that bring the daylight and the morning's peace
to those unhappy sleepers whose nightmares
only their voices reach and scatter, and bring ease.

But He must wear the death-mask and the weight
of man's humanity must clog His soul
for He has entered too the dream of hell,
and in the passing of the ivory gate
discarded godhead, bearing but the seal:
the heart, warm, living, unanaesthetized to hate.

O agony that breaks the brittle stars
and melts the metal of the hard, white moon;
the night is endless and the hour a tune
incessantly repeated till the ears
throb unendurably to the eternal tone
of earth's dumb misery and ceaseless, hopeless tears.

HE WILL NOT COME AGAIN

BY

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

He will not come again: that is the impasse.
The one high solitary mountain not surveyed.
The proud blend of lips lingers. The calm advice,
his muted cymbal, an echo which has not died,
searches the valleys of the brain; while the heat
of his hand clasp, warm and gold as an autumn day,
sends soft music through the arm, babbling to the heart,
till his smile, a drifting amethyst of dew
lighting the mystery of the sleeping rose at dawn,
pleads and pervades. Yet he will not come again;
that is the impasse. The diffident apology,
late as summer rain relieving drought,—unspoken;
tomorrow's plans, slow maturing as dusk joy,
weep in a sea mist on the hill road,—forsaken:
Moments as meteors are miraged in mind and about
the sun there is a grey imminence of disaster,
slow creeping, broodily, like an earthquake in prospect,
with subtle apprehensions, as wounds that fester:
Yet Faith, that old and battered, wandering suppliant, stands
patiently in the dim antechamber of despair,
while here, with the trinkets of pride setting my bounds,
I pause, a baffled pilgrim with a strange prayer,—
He cannot come again. He cannot come again,
that, that is the impasse.

FOR ELLEN TERRY

BY

JOHN RAYMOND

Although your springtime cometh by repute
Of earlier generations, even so
Is not the secret of that first enchantment
Articulate in this, the afterglow?

And so your laughter, birds in a summer garden,
Annihilates the hardness of the years
Makes this white joy, this ageless singing centre,
Integral, undefeated by the blur

Of recollection. You, whom time and beauty
Conspired to make a legend for the few
Warming the minds of men with bright remembrance
Whose gay and cadenced spirit sometime drew

The crowd's impassioned echo—Oh, withdraw
Dear lady, from this vivid strife, afar,
So we, in shadow at Life's crowded door
Follow your gallant and perpetual star.

DECEIVER'S SEASON

BY

DEREK STANFORD

Cast in the shape of scent or suggestion;
over, along night's avenue streaming,
as hope or moth above street-lamp flying,
paradise flutters the evening air.

Is it the almond's coral bay
which beckons both the heart and eye
to fabled continents of pearl
where paradise gardens sway with the wind?

Caught in a crochet of leaves and tresses—
a conjured trellis of gold and green—
close to the touch yet not for touching,
paradise hovers an inch out of hand.

So April ends and the charm is over.
One dawn within the shaken boughs
we find a death's-head choked with blossom . . .
paradise gardens fall in the wind.

POEM FOR THE TIME OF EASTER

BY

C. BUSBY SMITH

Moving out of winter with a new moon
and the unbearable agony of the frost
loosening its hold on moulded hill and valley,
a tidal wave of half-warmth O so slowly
in the brilliant night sliding, curving away,
shedding the skin of the old season
in a raw and naked greenness under the stars,
the hollow, echoing, still caverns of the world
wait in a frozen attitude of death
where miracles and griefs blossom on blackthorn hedges
and hands and tearing hearts cry out
in the bitter night: "O save us from this madness
of birth and death; O Osiris intercede
for the perpetual agony of the turning world."

In a burst of sunlight, Christ's head; and the day begins
that leads towards his Agony; and the garden
turns suddenly ominous and years of sin huddle
darkly beneath stones, waiting for expiation.
In the new morning, in the flourish of the sun, the trumpet
calling of light rising from the blue fathoms
of the sea, shrubs and flowers shout in the early spring
unmindful of the dark of the world approaching;
and he in his robe of wisdom walks through the ways
of green and gold under the almond trees
like an angelic gardener with his hands of grace.

The sun spun like a gold coin in the dazzling air tossed,
or a red fruit in the foliage of the sky's fastness,
draws up the hours towards noonday, and below,
some leagues from the sea of the garden, merchants, shoppers,
break off to rest and break bread and boast
in lunchtime tales of prowess, the gain of the morning.

The day darkening; "Oh Christ-sun stay with us longer."
The birds becoming mute after their evening flourish;

the far sea darkening; the deep world drowning
in ominous dark; the whorled buds cowering
in a womb of green walled round and warmed by sap;
night-howl of dog; bat-flight and blight of the dark;
and fingers catching on thorns, and cloaks tearing.

After their day, their eyes deep, the disciples come;
"Oh hornéd moon hang in the sky forever."
One weeps without knowing, another his lined face
hides with a calloused hand shuttering the mind.
The flower of Christ's mind opens in the ominous wind
that twitches the petals, that runs along the blood
all human and ripe for agony and afraid
for the fear that must not come, and the night approaching.

Even so the stars sing; even so the clouds
shake feathers down to the moon as she swings down
to the edge of the night; even so the woods quiver
with natural nocturnal life; only the hills
couch in their deep rotundities the calm
enveloping silence and closeness of great tombs.

Will the waiting never cease; the departed come back to us?
Wearied with waiting, sleep caresses and calms us;
but with a fitful calm troubled by spray of tears;
our sadness in waves of grief breaks on the eyes,
darker than sea-pools when the marauding sea
falls back and they like ancient elegies
reflect dark death-tales to the luminous sky.

The sky grows blue with light and the itching stars
whose clawing hands tear at the velvet night
are stilled in a sudden cry like the birth of worlds
ringing to God's heart and mercy with a black sound.
But out of the fathoms-deep sky only a sigh falls
like a woman's, a mother's, while some nightbird sings
somewhere her threnody in a scent of aloes.

And the night waits; and the agony; and we wait,
disciples of a future time. And see
the crimson soldiers come with their hands of death,
their bawdy gestures and songs and lewd glances
to stab all beauty with their vicious cries.
And through the echoing tunnels of birth and death
all the world spins beating on the gates of doom.

Oh be silent, do not speak, forget
all use of tongue and heart and banish from the eyes
what day would conjure up in a dancing vision;
only be blackness as the world is blackness
at the ninth hour and haunted by shapes of the past,
green ghosts of future madness; look not down
into the dark pit where deep graves gape open
and mouth to the violent sky; and never call
for any betraying mirror to witness how
all witless you too have become a ghost
weighed down with chains of sin and dumb as time.

Knock on the rock; scratch the thick air and rave
in a madman gesture without sound in the walled red city
of the treacherous mind; and let the lightnings come,
and the water boil in torrents of blood from the rock,
and tears, too late shed, like bullets blocking the eyes
turn misted sight to blight and blot of the dark.

Oh but forget all agony and anger; only weep
womanwise into the rising sun and let the light
strike on his dead flesh, flesh of the world's wound, setting
his spirit flamelike spiralling to the winded skies
in birdsong, larksong, sweep of tree and cloud;
wash with sweet air the bitter scent of myrrh
that gangrenes flower and leaf in the world's garden.

The wound in the side bleeds water with blood mingled;
in our mind's side perpetual agony bleeds.
Prepare the white tomb, womb, and in grave cloths smother, wrap
the budded rose that in the long dark was tortured
by its own cruel thorns, the palsied flesh, and lower
all this grave grief to the grave and render no more tears
to sorrow. Let angels casually come to bloom
with their brightness like orchids or cactus in the gloom
of the tomb's room, to strike the limey bones, until
Time's maggot from the time has eaten its leaf of days.

In the black anguish and hunger of the earth
leave the angelic sufferer in his quiet cage
with root and praying rock until the fretting rain
has ribbed three silent centuries down the walls of time
and the marriage day of the sun and the moon has come
and glory runs in seas round the rounded world.

The angel flowers in the cavern in the earth
and through roots of Juniper, rock-twined, sap of the morning
rises to sing jubilation in the fire of the sun
and day holds white dominion and the night dies.

Now see how trees leap, hear how waters sing,
how swift birds brilliant flash with emeralds in their eyes
and the winged fish skimming green waves in the locked bay
heavy with salt, stinging, and shimmering in the light,
and all the dotted islands of earth and air
to the waking eye in the forgiving morning glow
glisten with dew and clamour with triumphant greeting
to praise this gardener-ghost trampling on the hands of death
and with dark laughter setting the new world shaking.

How with a slow smile on the low road for a mile he walks
questioning with his glance and mysterious as great deserts
with the mirages of his eyes and ten-flamed flickering hands.
We walk in a sea of wonder weighed under still by grief
unwilling to believe in the triumphant flowering
miracle of the resurrection and the gates of love flung open:
our eyes still black with pennies and wrapped in the bands
of his scented shroud who through rock and barrier has burst
to the ascenting glory of the morning uprisen from the dead.

What tales of hell he tells in the shell of his mind;
what hymn of wonder on the heaven of his tongue
chants like a choir of angels we are dumb to ask,
placing instead our numbed hands into his hands
and into the nails' wounds entering as into a grave
faint with the agony of the tomb engulfing us.

Pitiful as snowdrops in the spring wind to the revelation
of perpetual life and death and the glory of forever
we are brought on the edge of the morning of his returning;
and to tell women who weep the miracle is the first task,
and after, the joy of lovers and comfort of hungry children,
the hope of Europe embalmed in its starvation
and station of despair poised on the edge of death.

O enter the sun's heart in the glorious morning leaping
in a praise of spring carols and jubilant celebration

of sap and shooting-green the everlasting strange renewal
of light after dark, feather-touch of finger after the stiff
agony of the close grave, laughter and love-of-life after
the tears and the weeping and the bright mouth stopped with dust.
O sing in the dawn of the resurrection with the gay stars
choiring their cortege to the marriage of moon and sun
in the blue heaven of the spring sky blessing the new season;
cry out the towering glory of the perpetual progression
through death to death and the carolling of the blood,
the might and majesty of crimson resurrection
and the vast love flowing through the rivers of the world.

Moving toward summer with the vermillion sun
showering with bees all flowers and foliage,
the green and gracious hills poised in the scented air,
we rise like fire-limbed lions in a new Eden
out of the night with birds perched on our eyes.

SONNET

BY

HILARY CORKE

The dead have power over those who have shed their blood:
Remember Agamemnon and reflect.
Love is our butchered king: his bones are seed
To breed tomb-prowlers after us through the wrecked
Hall-royal in the dark and guilty wood.
O let us search and find the mound where wave
The unquiet irises remembering him;
Somewhere in weeping twilight in the slim
Chancel of larches where the diggers have
Secretly laid him, let us go and shed
Tears, as once blood, for him; though he reject,
Offer the gifts again, appease the god
With elegies of the downcast cherubim,
And soft pale flowers strewn lightly on the grave.

"SUMMER'S LAST WILL..."

BY

JOHN BAYLISS

That breakneck Summer with its bridge of gold
now marks a summit I cannot attain
for all that comes is old and in decline.

And tatterdamalion Time puffs out my days
as grandfathers blow dandelion clocks
to tell young children that the dark draws near.

Lightheaded and lighthearted, I would stare
in former days at girls and glittering water,
but now the river banks are rank and bare.

And in this ruined and revenging season
the tidal river takes my argosies
down with its eddies to the dark horizon.

So that my hopes go huddling with the birds
high on the windward ledge above my head,
now like old men precariously sleeping,—
repeating their thin dreams in a cold bed.

Sleet from the north attacks the sheltering gulls
and my gold day goes down by blackened hulls.

TWO POEMS

BY

JEAN KENWARD

CHINA HORSE

This china horse frets under foam of flowers—
Even the porcelain heart has its desire—
And through his mane surely the sea-wind lowers
And in his nostril flames incarnate fire.

Seagulls allure him; the fey, feckless sail,
Buoys in lost waters lulling tired bells,
And on his flanks and filmy fetlocks pale
Gather no shades at all, but cockle shells.

CHILD

The star, the panther and the silent gem:
These are not what they seem.
The widow fish in weeds of grey and green
Swinging down stream,
The curious husk that butterflies abandon,
Bees in delight that dally near a linden
Are more than dream.

So is this perfume and secure estate
This subtle film of knowing
Now between spirit and its stubborn mate
Softly diffusing:
This secret hemisphere that lies between
The visible child without, the child within,
As thick as cream.

A STAR

BY

ARTHUR BALL

Hang where the cliff is yellow with excess
Of April primroses. Let the sun shoot
Torrents of gold on your down-glancing face,
My seeker for life-treasure. Catch from far
The blue light on the horizon's warm escape
From eyesight and man's measuring. O take
Your wine from this stored bottle of bright air!
Such spendthrift gifts of such a carefree noon
Will lay up splendour for you. If you break
This covenant, when will you dare again
To fall down chasms of glory and still live,
Since here is life's best offer? In this bar
Of wealth lies all the medicine to wake
Your sleep-fast half-belief to wings that take
The steeps of wonder, drinking joy with pain
Till night with recollection flames, a star.

PATIENT FURY

BY

NORMAN C. PALLANT

I

Smiling, I sit in memory of your kiss,
So gentle and so grave a sacrifice.
Forgive an inward laughter—even this
Serves like a star the long night in my eyes.
Seeing that passion's servant is that flame
That dares not burn, my lips were something slow
In deference, homage—give it any name,
I am too full of tenderness to know.
But still believe a solemn glory gleams
On one who gains a heaven for heaven's sake,
And if I trespass there as one who dreams
Of beauty—why, I have no wish to wake.
And all the bells that toll for fancy's doom
Toll unregarded in a timeless room.

II

How shall I say I love you? Not with words,
For words are silly, clumsy, limping things
That drag through gutter dust like broken birds
In parody of flight. There are no wings
On words—my words, at least. Then shall I lean
On that strong limb of silence, thunder-arm,
That holds the summer when her eyes have seen
Too much of beauty, and the patient, calm
Corn waits in worship for the laggard wind?
Or shall I turn in frenzy to the stark
Cold face of ageless chaos, black and blind,
Shouting your name in challenge to the dark?
All ways are witless, all are less than wise,
For you have loveliness, and I have eyes.

III

Last night between the midnight and the moon
I walked in sleep beside you on the shores
Of some lost planet's silver-lit lagoon

Burning with liquid light beyond the doors
Of grape-bloom dusk. I neither looked at you
Nor spoke, but, drowned in splendour, knew you there
And was content—until the water's hue
Grew cold, and in the softly singing air
Flew vulture shapes of fear. Then, with a cry,
I sought to hide my head against your breast
And found myself alone beneath a sky
Of crawling vapours—dread made manifest.
But then your laughing face through limbo broke.
The moon was shining on me when I woke.

IV

Secret from quip and questioner I lie
Surrounded by the night's dark brotherhood
Of wakeful earth and whispering trees which sigh
The one strong truth you have not understood.
Our Edens are not lost while memory lives,
No flower may die there while compassion rules
The utterance of the hollow negatives
Behind the faceless mask we show to fools.
So may I count the pathways of my own,
Knowing not one is buried by the years,
And if it rains in Eden, I have known
The grass spring greener for the balm of tears.
And, see—upon the wind an emblem blows:
Pinned to the heart of morning is a rose.

V

Think what you may of me, but in your thought
Set this apart—that I will not be shamed
Or blamed in loving you. There is a court
Sits far above our consciences, unnamed,
Unnameable, wherein the tattered cause,
Held like a prideful flag, finds faithfulness,
And all your silken morals, coloured laws,
Are mendicants in sackcloth, championless.
Fashion your mind, then, marshal, mould and mill,
Break me upon time's wheel, and exorcise
The spectre in your stubborn heart—and still
I love, and would not have it otherwise.
"But yet—the end!" you say. Remember this—
Smiling, I sit in memory of your kiss!

NOTE.—The opinions expressed in the following articles, reviews and letters are not necessarily those of the editor.

FROM SOUTH AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE

BY

GEORGE WOODCOCK

An Anthology of Contemporary Latin American Poetry, edited by Dudley Fitts (New Directions, 21s.); *Residence on Earth* by Pablo Neruda (New Directions, 15s.); *Spearhead* (New Directions, $5), *A House in Chicago* by Olivia Howard Dunbar (Cambridge University Press, 20s.); *A Second Book of Danish Verse* translated by Charles Wharton Stork (Princeton University Press: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 14s.); *The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus* translated by Rex Warner (Bodley Head, 6s.)

The Latin American countries remain largely an unknown territory, a literary Upper Amazons, to the English reader of poetry. The reputation of a mere handful of the leading poets of some of these lands, such as the Chilean Pablo Neruda, has penetrated to Britain, and isolated translations of some of their poems have appeared occasionally in English magazines of restricted circulation. These occasional poems have aroused interest because of the peculiarly concrete vividness of their imagery, but until recently we have had no opportunity to survey the poetry of these small countries, outside the ambit of European culture yet profoundly influenced by it, in anything like an adequate manner.

Now, however, two books published by the *avant-garde* American house of *New Directions* and distributed in England by the Falcon Press, have at last presented us with something approaching an adequate selection of Latin American poetry. These are, *An Anthology of Latin-American Poetry,* edited by Dudley Fitts, and *Residence on Earth,* by Pablo Neruda, translated by Angel Flores.

These books between them reveal a whole new world of poetic achievement, and demonstrate that in such countries as Brazil, Chile and Mexico, and even in the smaller South American lands, a synthesis of the old European culture and the revivified native culture has combined to produce a genuine and amazing renaissance of lyrical activity. Both books contain the Spanish or Portuguese originals of the poems, and for anyone with even a smattering of these languages this makes the selections all the more fascinating and profitable.

In reading the anthology which Mr. Fitts has compiled one is conscious

of two really strong impressions. Firstly, there is a surprising homogeneity in the kind of work being produced by these poets, to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish between the poetry of the various lands. A common tradition of language unites them into a solid manifestation of one Latin American culture which seems to know no frontiers between one republic and the next ; a continental culture rather than a series of national cultures seems to be arising between these countries. Secondly, there is in the majority of the poems selected a concrete quality of such strength that the character of the original seems to impress itself on the translation almost without the help of the translator, so that even the somewhat indifferent renderings (which fortunately are few) rarely fail to convey something of the original vigour.

Although, as I have said, these poems show a great homogeneity of nature, the sign of an integrated and healthy culture, they are none the less varied in form, and the South American poets, while they have assimilated in various degrees the poetic innovations that have emanated from Europe and North America during the past thirty years, present a real individuality and versatility of utterance.

This anthology contains work by almost a hundred poets, and it is difficult, within a short review, to make any quotations that will give an adequate idea of the nature of the vigorous poetic culture which these writers represent. Here, however, are some lines from *Biography for the Use of the Birds,* by the Ecuadorian poet, Jorge Carrera Andrade, which show the type of vivid concrete imagery typical of Latin American poetry:

My mother, clothed in the setting sun,
Put away her youth in a deep guitar,
and only on certain evenings would she show it to her children,
sheathed in music, light, and words.
I loved the water-writing of the rain,
the yellow gnats from the apple tree,
and the toads that would sound from time to time
their bulging wooden bells.

The great sail of the air manouevred endlessly.
The mountain range was a shoreline of the sky.
The storm would come, and at the roll of its drum
its drenched regiments would charge;
but then the sun with its golden patrols
would bring back translucent peace to the fields . . .

All has gone now, in sequent waves,
like the futile cyphers of the foam.
The years go leisurely entangling their lichens,
and memory is scarcely a water-lily

showing on the surface timidly
its drowned face.
The guitar is only a coffin for songs,
and the head-wounded cock laments.
All the angels of the earth have emigrated,
even the dark angel of the cacao tree.

Here is a rather more delicately evocative poem by the Argentinian writer, Conrado Nale Roxlo:

The forest falls asleep and dreams,
the river does not sleep, but sings.
Among the green shadows
the ringing water flows
leaving on the dark bank
flecks of white foam.
My eyes are filled with stars,
on the bottom of a boat,
I pass like an emotion
over the music of the water,
and I bear the river on my lips,
and I bear the forest in my soul

A wholly different kind of poetry, springing out of the grimmer atmosphere of civil war and guerilla fighting, is that of the Guatemalan poet, Francisco Mendez, reminiscent in some ways of Whitman, in others of Mayakovsky. Here are a few lines from his poem, "Blood on the Stone".

What shootings wasn't poor Poncho mixed up in,
slamming ounces of lead into the gringos!
His hat would pass through the clouds of smoke, yellow
from so much burning in the sun and from twilight sweat;
and a quick shower of dust behind his horse.
On what river-bank, in what cosy spot,
in what flash joint, did death tangle with him?
His belly slit wide, eyeballs yanked out,
Lieutenant Visquera's lads found him
with seven gringo bullets sunk in his bones.

Disturbing and ugly poetry, yet it represents an essential element in the Latin American world!

These quotations are picked at random; they are by no means the best in a book of really interesting poems, with a generally high standard of translation. The value of this anthology is increased by an appendix giving biographical information regarding the poets included.

One of the poets most prominent in the anthology I have just reviewed is Pablo Neruda, the best known Latin American poet in America and

Western Europe, and I have only neglected to mention him, because of his own book, *Residence of Earth,* which appears at the same time as the anthology.

Neruda's reputation is undoubtedly deserved, if one considers his best poems. But he is an extremely uneven writer, and subject to strong literary and political influences, which are not always well assimilated into his verse. His surrealism, for instance, sometimes breaks down into an almost sheer banality, as in these lines:

> It is a tale of wounded bones
> of bitter circumstances and endless clothes,
> And stockings suddenly sober.
> It is deep night, head without veins
> From which the day abruptly falls
> as if from a bottle shattered by lightning.
>
> It is feet and clocks and fingers
> and a locomotive of moribund soap,
> and a sour sky of damp metal,
> and a yellow river of smiles.

And when his quite sincere political sympathies overcome his poetic instinct, the result, as in poets like Mayakovsky, is mere ranting, political rhetoric which has nothing to do with poetry, as when he shouts:

> Stalingrad, there is still no Second Front,
> but you shall not fall though iron and fire
> gnaw you day and night.
>
> Even if you die, you will not die!

But such lapses do not take away from the fact that at his best, when he is most himself and has most carefully absorbed all the influences he draws so greedily to him, Neruda is really a very fine poet, as in "Adonic Angela:

> Today I lay beside a pure girl
> as upon the beach of a white ocean,
> as in the centre of a burning star
> of slow space.
>
> From her glance longly green
> light fell like dry water,
> in transparent and profound circles
> of fresh strength . . .

or in that eloquent poem of loneliness, "Walking Around":

I don't want to go on being a root in the dark,
vacillating spread out, shivering with sleep,
downward, into the wet bowels of the earth,
absorbing and thinking, eating every day.

I don't want so many cares upon my head.
I don't want to go on being root and tomb,
alone underground, a vault with dead men,
numb with cold, perishing with anguish.

An extremely interesting anthology from North America is *Spearhead* a very large collection of American experimental writing, both prose and verse, over the last quarter of a century. All the more famous names are there—Gertrude Stein, Henry Miller, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and some of these, seen over the space of years, seem in fact to have given little of importance to literature, though others, Miller and Williams among them, seem only to have increased in stature. But the anthology is perhaps most interesting for the introduction it gives to writers less familiar to English readers. This is not the place for me to discuss the prose items, but among the poets I would mention particularly Randall Jarrell, Karl Shapiro, James Laughlin and Kenneth Rexroth. The most interesting of these is undoubtedly Rexroth, and his long piece, "The Phoenix and the Tortoise", is one of the best philosophical poems written in English by a younger poet of today. At present I can do no more than quote the last lines of this moving verse treatise on human liberty, but I can recommend it to all who get the chance to read it as one of the best works of modern American verse.

I walk back along the sandspit,
The horizon cuts the moon in half,
And far out at sea a path of light,
Violent brilliant, reflected
From high stratus clouds and then again
On the moving sea, the invisible
Sunrise spreads its light before the moon.

My wife has been swimming in the breakers,
She comes up the beach to meet me, nude,
Sparkling with water, singing high and clear
Against the surf. The sun crosses
The hills and fills her hair, as it lights
The moon and glorifies the sea
And deep in the empty mountains meets
The snow of the winter and the glaciers
Of ten thousand years.

A past period in American writing is represented by *A House in Chicago* by Olivia Howard Dunbar, a biography of the Chicago literary hostess Harriet Moody. It is a padded and pedestrian book. One has the feeling that, however pleasant a person Harriet Moody may have been, her significance in literary history and the events of her life could have been dealt with justly in a medium-sized essay. The present badly-constructed biography merely hides her memory in a cloud of dulness.

One would have expected a highly-civilised people like the Danes to have a tradition of interesting, if not great poetry. But Mr. Stork's translations, in his *Second Book of Danish Verse*, leave one with the impression of a fundamental lifelessness and unoriginality in Danish poetry. The nineteenth-century pieces are characterised by a kind of belated German romanticism; Heine and Goethe are the evident models of these not very competent imitations. Nor does the later verse show much more in the way of a live indigenous poetic tradition, although in very recent years there seems to have been a slight revival of interesting satirical verse. Either Mr. Stork has chosen badly and translated indifferently, or Danish poetry is in fact almost uniformly dull and lifeless.

Finally, as the last of a miscellaneous collection, there is a new translation of the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus, by Rex Warner. Mr. Warner modernises his translation to point the essential link between the idea of Prometheus struggling against a heavenly tyranny and man today struggling against the forces of dictatorship. He is indifferently successful, since at times his verse falls into an unrhythmical flatness:

> "Therefore
> he must pay the price of such a sin to the gods,
> that he may be taught to bend to the dictatorship
> of Zeus, and give up his ideas of helping man."

But elsewhere his English has something of the vigour one associates with the classic Greek drama, and his new version is undoubtedly an improvement on the standard translations, with their shoddy poeticism and frequent distortions of the text to fit a Victorian verse pattern.

NEW CONTEMPORARY POETRY

REVIEWED BY

HOWARD SERGEANT

Cambridge Verse I and II (Young Writers Group, 6d. and 2s. 6d. respectively); *Poems from Obscurity,* Margiad Evans (Dakers, 5s.); *Murdock and Other Poems,* Francis Berry (Dakers, 5s.); *Seasons at War,* Ross Nicholls (Forge Press, 3s. 6d.); *Some Way for Reason,* Maurice James Craig (Heinemann, 6s.); *Unarm, Eros,* Terence Tiller (Hogarth Press, 5s.); *Imagine the South,* George Woodcock (The Untide Press, California, 50c.).

It is always interesting to study the University collections of verse, if only for the purpose of deciding who of the contributors show any genuine talent and are likely to produce work of significance in the future. If this practice seems too much like playing the tipster—and why should not the literary critic study form?—it should be remembered that the work of several of the most outstanding young poets writing today first attracted notice in such publications. The first two issues of *Cambridge Verse,* whilst revealing no hidden genius, contain some accomplished poems by three new poets, K. W. Gransden, Roy Stevens and Eric Towers, of whom I think we shall hear more. R. Ivy, with his *In the Milk Bar, Saxophone* and *Crooner* achieves superficiality in his efforts to be slick, but in his more serious vein, *Day Dazzled,* he is worth attention. It would be unfair to compare this poetry booklet with *Oxford Poetry,* the anthology I mentioned in the last issue of *Poetry Review,* for the simple reason that they have been compiled with different objects in view; nevertheless, it is apparent that the same tendency towards lyricism and imaginative writing is at work in both University groups.

Those readers who have enjoyed the novels and essays of Miss Margiad Evans will not be disappointed by her *Poems from Obscurity,* and they can be assured that the contemplative serenity and evocative charm which characterise her prose are equally in evidence in her poetry. Taking the collection as a whole, one wonders whether there is not a little too much serenity and charm, but if many of the poems are merely fragments of ideas they are extremely delicate fragments. One accepts and is thankful. Miss Evans is a neat craftsman and though she chooses the conventionally poetic subjects, she succeeds in making them distinctly her own:

> "This lily bloom has drunk a bee
> One stiff brown drop of summer's ooze;

I look to see the white neck swell
The long lips smile—"

(I am reminded, inevitably, of Arnold Vincent Bowen's "The summer bee a-boozing goes"). *The Passionate Refusal* answers Christopher Marlowe's *Passionate Shepherd to his Love* in an unexpectedly practical manner:

"I would not lead so hard a life,
She said, to be a labourer's wife.
To serve with love and gravy feasts
My husband, slogman to the beasts.

To share his hands with cattle hide,
And lie down on the bed beside
The form of him who spread the straw
For pigs and cows to dung the floor."

Although Miss Evans avoids the typical speech cadences of the Welsh, in one of her poems, *Resurrection,* she captures the Celtic note of mystery:

"For when in my resurgent hands
I take the mirror weedy with brown hair:
Rustling the dark wind through the glass—
Oh, who is there?"

After Miss Evans' book, *Murdock and Other Poems* by Mr. Francis Berry comes as a shock of colour and excitement. This is poetry of action, and for the major part, it is surprisingly well done—particularly in the four poems of *Mediterranean Year.* If Blake was right in associating energy with beauty, then Mr. Berry is a poet indeed; at least, he can be excused for such lapses as:

"Now Lud's long horn lifts up its loud and lowing lip
And lorn in longing rends out its evening call:
On London bridge . . ."

where his love for alliteration has had a bathetic effect. The most striking feature of Mr. Berry's work is the richness of his imagination which, together with the vigour of his style, makes a powerful impact upon the reader's mind. The long title poem, concerned with the local tradition of an English village or country town, is of a lower standard than the other poems and is not successful as a dramatic narrative because the development of the theme is quite inadequate to its purpose. The language, here, often seems to be forced rather than flowing and the overuse of capital letters is distracting. *The Drumming Fist* shows the poet in a different yet far more effective mood:

"My pale still lily, spite of Beggar's powers
We'll hold him long enough outside our door
To make this winter night a Child of ours
Who'll hear the Fist when we can hear no more;
And I perhaps (unknowing lucky) moulder
On the sweet bone at last of your bright shoulder.
And not outright will Death have won:
If drumming Fist disquiets our son
This night survives annihilation."

In his previous book, *The Cosmic Shape,* Mr. Ross Nicholls outlined the growth of myth ("truth outside of time") and, emphasising its necessity in man's relationship with nature, attempted to prove that poetry is the ideal medium for the re-integration of myth. *Seasons at War,* a cycle of rhythms illustrating the seasonal changes and the conflict between the powers of darkness and light by means of legends, biblical and mythological symbols, is also informed by this theory. It was probably written about the same time as *The Cosmic Shape,* but the poems are arranged to greater advantage, and the method is more convincingly demonstrated.

"Whence for our modern consciousness comes revelation,
who are our heavyweight saints, who calls for surrender?"

asks Mr. Nicholls in *Meditation during Fast,* and replies:

"We must in strange places seek for our saints, nor bear
they the mark
over-sure of their rank; amateur, almost it seems
experimental
they may be found scattered amongst the strange doctrines:
Schweitzer and Gandhi and the curious Cloud of Unknowing
(not I think the Red Cloud):—Hopkins and Gaudier-Brzska
bent upon truth in the telling, as the Christians in
fining the life-stuff
and changing its flow—"

the last phrase, I take it, being a reference to the way in which the Christian Church appropriated and put to its own use the ancient myths and festivals. Occasionally he slips into a facile sentence like "I think that I shall never see a bosom tenderer than a tree," which gains nothing in associational value from the poem from which it is derived. And surely there is no point in re-iterating the substance of various myths as Mr. Nicholls does in *Formal Reflection.* If myth is to have any value for us, it must be transformed and co-ordinated with modern conditions. As Jack Lindsay remarks in his *Perspective for Poetry*: "The myth-desire is right in so far as it utters a realisation of poetry's deep genetic basis, a

basis which involves the capacity of the whole psyche to beget powerful symbolic images and forms out of its fused organic and social experience." That Mr. Nicholls is a poet apart from his theories is shown in *Yggdrasil*:

"The great tree rose into the sky out of the straining land
downdrawing moisture for the fields, for the red of furrows
for the mauve seed-flowering grasses and their drifts
of yellow
their stars and their wind-waves and for the crops that come:
for all the yield and ripening of the foison of the field:
creating a cool mystery within its fluttering dome."

"And pity is lost on the tongues of the witty" writes Mr. Maurice James Craig in *Kilcarty to Dublin,* one of the poems in his *Some Way for Reason,* and that—if one interpolates "would-be" before "witty"—is the principal defect of his book: for not only the pity but also much of the poetry has been lost in his "satiric enjoyment of most things in Heaven and earth" (as his publishers describe it). There are far too many of those slight pieces that one usually finds tucked away in odd corners of the popular magazines. Mr. Craig's conception of wit is based largely upon such puns and phrases as:

"The sensitive spectator still must weigh
The Ayes against the nose."

and

"Nor sounder than the chaser sleeps the chaste."

This is unfortunate because he is an intelligent and skilful writer whose technique, at present, is superior to the ideas he wishes to express.

Unarm, Eros, by Mr. Terence Tiller, is a more stimulating book. It is the product of a mature and imaginative mind and, in my opinion, a distinct advance in clarity on the author's previous books. There is the same sense of design and control, the same musical language and subtleties of thought to which one responded in the earlier work combined with a greater precision in visual imagery, as will be seen in

"the washed and choirboy afternoon"

"a silkwhite skein of egrets that sew-up
the ploughman's gashes in a field:"

or of camels:

"Gentle and sure as pianists' hands, their feet
deliberating on the stone press out
in rhythms that have nothing to do with us"

where the images are not merely descriptive but help to create the atmosphere necessary to the poems. The fascination of these poems lies in

Mr. Tiller's gift for defining the almost indefinable, for expressing ideas and emotions which for many of us are never more than blurred sensations—most pleasingly in *Perfumes, Hands* and *Beggar*. The consistent standard of quality throughout the book, with the single exception of *Detective Story,* makes it difficult to select any poem as representative, and quotation would be but the exercise of personal preference.

Imagine the South has been published in America and I fear that our import restrictions will prevent it from having the circulation in this country which it deserves. That is our loss because its author, Mr. George Woodcock, effectively combines a keen social awareness with a lyrical power that emphasises all he has to say. From first to last these poems reveal his very deep concern with the complex problems of an ailing society and his belief that both the cause and cure of the disease are to be found in the individual. In the long poem *Waterloo Bridge,* he deals at length with his main subject:

> "So we are dead who could not make in life
> That peace in beauty which our gods ordained,"

and, turning inwards, finds his solution:

> "We must erect, within the circled soul
> A centre warm to our peculiar life,
> Signed with our individual breath and will.
> We, as the rose, must blossom at the heart,
> Closed like the flesh sea flower against death's hurt."

Other aspects, equally important, are successfully handled in *Imagine the South, The Fugitive, The Announcer's Speech, The Agitator* and *Self,* all fine poems. Even the pictorial poems reflect his sense of humanitarianism and personal responsibility, as in *Snow,* for instance:

> "Griming the white of time's instable floe,
> Man's shame survived the judgments of the snow."

Unlike most young poets, Mr. Woodcock has not been afraid to prune his work, and his book has something fresh to offer for each re-reading. Those who are unable to obtain their own copy of his book should endeavour to borrow one (but not from me).

ARTISTS AND ARTIFICERS

BY

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

The 'Frue' . . . and the Fight, by Cyril Stott (Fredk. Muller, 7s. 6d.), *The Breathless Kingdom,* by Wrenne Jarman (Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.); *After Battle,* by James Monahan (Macmillan, 5s.); *Poems,* by L. F. Herbert (Basil Blackwell, 4s. 6d.); *Songs and Sonnets,* by Kenneth Hopkins (Grasshopper Press, 2s. 6d.); *Stars' Roundelay,* by Isabel Wyatt, (Dakers, 5s.); *City Sonnets,* by Esme Hooton (Routledge, 5s.); *Boding Day,* by Ewart Milne (Fredk Muller, 7s. 6d.); *Poems of a South African,* by A. Vine Hall (Longmans, 10s. 6d.); *Poems of a Bee-Keeper,* by Everard Stokes (The Author, Sea-Girt, N. J. $2.00); *Sanity Rare,* by E. S. Hole (Allen & Unwin, 5s.); *Poems of Sleep and Dream,* Ed. by Carol Stewart (Fredk. Muller, 10s. 6d).

Before reviewing a batch of contemporary poets I would advise any critic to visit the nearest representative Art Collection, the National Gallery for preference. I did this myself before starting this article, a sudden whim deflecting me from the footboard of a 'bus up the stone steps and into the midst of the Cleaned Pictures. And the brief visit did me good. It reminded me of the permanent necessity and compulsion of art in the life of mankind, of the organic growth and continuity of that element which, for want of a better word, we may call the principle of beauty. There, in those spacious rooms, so many conflicts have been subdued and resolved. There they are, the French Impressionists, the almost tangible Dutch Interiors, the apocalyptic stormlight of El Greco, Bellini's gracious Madonnas, the gross opulence of Rubens, the Primitives, the Titians and Rembrandts, the cool and leafy Constables, Velasquez' portraits of Philip IV and that superb commemoration of physical loveliness, the Rokeby Venus. And nowhere do you stand and say "These, these only are the people!" Yet consider what rivalries of schools, what passions of conflicting personalities, what intrigues and denunciations and boycotts have been associated with these artists and their works. All now resolved in the grand reconciliation of time. But Chelsea and Montparnasse and St. John's Wood will still be creating and fermenting and praising and detracting, and we cannot yet get the contemporary strife into perspective.

There is a moral in this preamble which may well be applied to the art of poetry. Time makes an equation of the best, and though we shall

always be trying to anticipate the Mathematician we must admit the possibility of error in our calculations.

But certainly I have not spotted any immortals in the poets under review. Some are smooth and traditional to the point of innocuousness; some are gaily or portentously journalistic; some combine high seriousness with the newer idiom in verse; and some just do a sound well-accomplished job in an old manner.

I put first a book which is likely to give the greatest pleasure to the greatest number. In his Foreword Mr. Cyril Stott mentions that he has himself been in the boxing business. So he knows what he's talking about when in *The Fight* he describes a contest between a couple of deadly lightweights. I suspect he has also a firsthand acquaintance with the sea, for not since Masefield in his narrative prime have I read so stirring a dramatic poem as *The 'Frue.'* It would be fair, I think, to say that without Masefield there wouldn't have been Stott, and it is handsome of the Laureate to praise his disciple. Mr. Stott has something of the older man's swing and dramatic intensity; his octosyllabic couplets tumble over each other in a similar fine invention, and he shares Masefield's warm feeling for humanity in the rough. But when I've allowed for this mastering influence the fact remains that these two Tyneside poems are a joy to read. I quote one passage describing the midnight ramming of one trawler by another:

> The huge bows plunged from towering over,
> And for'ard of the wheelhouse clove her.
> The deck-plates buckled as the bows did rape her,
> And the bulwark burst like a wall of paper.
> The foremast tottered, the mizzen, crashing,
> Athwart the lifeboat stern went smashing.
> She reeled, she rolled, her head was under
> In a surge of seas that swept in thunder—
> In thunder, thunder . . . and as she stooped
> A solid wall behind her pooped.
> She fought to rise. With a grinding crack
> Her keel-plates sprung as she broke her back.

Miss Wrenne Jarman's range of interest and verse-technique in *The Breathless Kingdom* is the most instantly satisfying thing about her book. No thing or occasion seems to escape her; she thinks and feels, lives and moves in a full engrossing world, observes, listens and makes notes. The result is that there is not a dull page in her book. Sometimes the touch is careless, as though she were determined at all costs to get a poem written, but mostly there is evidence of the indwelling force of a true poet. Over all, she shows a combination, rare in women poets, of modern scientific curiosity and deep spiritual awareness:

Between one instant and another, lie
Whole sunken continents of time, that sway
Vagariously beneath infinity,
And sometimes lift small peaks above the spray.
In the held breath before the whirring chimes
Empires might rise and vanish in the sand:
Rome could live Athens down a hundred times
Within the jerking of the seconds-hand.

The time-sense, arctic exploration, solar eclipse, planes in flight, prophetic fancies of the world's millennial salvation; these and many lesser themes make the substance of a worthwhile and welcome book.

Echoes of the war and of the first months of our debatable peace are to be heard in Mr. James Monahan's *After Battle*. He, or his publisher, evidently thinks that the poetry-reading public needs some soothing reassurance, for the jacket-blurb informs us that "originality is no longer to be found in startling experimentation" and we are told that these poems "are intended always to scan, and usually to rhyme." They do both, and do them well, but it is with the living spirit in the lines that we are concerned—the emergence and crystallization of spontaneous images. These abound in Mr. Monahan's work, but they are images from his conscious rather than his unconscious mind, and perhaps because of this they make a swifter and more obvious appeal than the poetic images of some of his contemporaries. When he sees a perambulator as a trim ship with its anchor up, or a friend as "a curious citadel above the wastes of an unvaried sea," or the watch-tower elms wearing "leaves of sunset like a coronet" I recognize an artist's delight in conscious ornamentation of thought and word. This book has the quality of good water-colours.

Mr. L. F. Herbert's *Poems* reflect a profound consciousness of the frustration and suffering in human experience. In "A Poem for the Peace" he protests against the conception of suffering as something fine and ennobling. Suffering degrades the weak, it does not ennoble:

That is the armchair-thesis of the fed,
of dons in wine, of philosophers abed.

When everything he hears and reads is fair and comfortable this poet will:

remember still
the crying and the breaking of the weak
dragged down
under the furrow of their masters' ploughs,
under the sea with wrecks and disasters,
with their flesh and their spirit

ploughed into the earth,
dragging the sea-bottom.

But rhetoric is not his only strength. He is surest in his lyrics, and of these I quote "The Dreamers":

Their hearts are washed of ease or breaking:
they with a dream have dwelt, sleeping and waking;
they with a dream of dreams under their eyes
saw and saw not the sundown or the moon's rise.
But keeping the secret bridges of their wonder,
all heaven passed over and the world passed under.

Somewhat similar in his instinctive music is Mr. Kenneth Hopkins in *Songs and Sonnets*. His frugal brochure proclaims one who only resorts to verse under the heart's compulsion. He has no daily income of rhyme, but what he has he spends freely and joyously. In "The Last Settler" he compresses a whole covered wagon saga into twenty-seven short lines. He makes us feel those savage spears closing in upon the doomed man:

Here in the house,
With bullets five,
I wait like a mouse,
O Christ! alive—

In a hundred years
In the fallen stones
Someone shall find
Six sets of bones.

And in "Jenny Beguiled" he invites comparison with Leigh Hunt's triolet.

Lyrical and Christian-mystical impulses blend in Miss Isobel Wyatt's *Stars' Roundelay*. Unlike Mr. Herbert she celebrates pain and suffering with the passion of a devotee. She is completely other-worldly. Humility and exaltation glow in her spirit:

What if *this* world, as much beyond *my* wit,
Were Someone's garden, I a fly in it?

In the presence of such religious conviction literary criticism might well be suspended, but there is no need for this; her lyrical ability stands high and should ensure for her a place in devotional anthologies. Some of her work reminds me of Christina Rossetti's.

It is perhaps significant that in our torn materialistic world so many women poets of quality should find mystical inspiration. The next book, Miss Esme Hooton's *City Sonnets*, ranks her at once with Miss Kathleen Raine and Mrs. Anne Ridler. Her verse is ecstatic, but it is of a close compact order, with rich deeply-felt symbols studding it. I quote from her first impressive poem, "The Christ":

You shall drink of the cup whereof I drink:
I break the grape, the cup floods full, I drink,
I taste: the froth of that bitter potion on

My lips is as a stain and to the dregs
I shall drink of the vintage of that cup.
And later that cup shall be drawn and drained
By your lips tasting then this wine I drink.
It is a cup shall float us on a sea.
Itself shall drown and from our lips shall pass
All stain, all vintage from this grape distilled.

She carries her mysticism into London's City, and in those four title sonnets she sees the martyred City like a "sinewed bird white-spanned with wings." A majestic and unforgettable image.

I come to Mr. Ewart Milne's *Boding Day* and accord him the fellow-feeling of my part-Irish strain. His verse has in it a spontaneous stream of music, whether he is celebrating that lovely Hill of Howth, which to see is never to forget, or elegising Sidney Keyes, or writing a "Postscript to a Love Letter." Earlier his work has had in it more than a little of Celtic twilight, but in this new book his expression is closely woven from thought and feeling and the poet's warm humanity attains a shape:

Now all that's over: all over and finished.
Alone on midnight's troubled promontory I ponder
The life and death of nations great and small,
If freedom gained is freedom lost? Why men turn back
As dog to vomit—to their vanished generations,
And for a not to be recaptured nationhood destroy a world?

Mr. Arthur Vine Hall's *Poems of a South African* has attained the formidable dignity of a Fourteenth Edition. The book can also be had in six separate sections, but I fancy that admirers of this doughty and resourceful rhymer—who is now in his 85th year—will be satisfied to have his lifework in one volume.

A contemporary American comes up for notice. Mr. Everard Stokes is a nature-lover, a bee-keeper, a poet who can command the excellent printing of the Princeton University Press—and his own publisher. He lives at Sea-Girt, New Jersey, and it is there he tends his garden and his bees, writes his verses and celebrates the joy of living. I think Sea-Girt must be a delectable spot and one conducive to the production of both honey and verse. In *Poems of a Bee-Keeper* he explores the art or business of apiculture with the diligence of a Fabre and something of the imagination of a Maeterlinck; and if his verse is rather obviously instructive and suggestive of set exercises it yet has the charm of cultured sincerity. His bee sonnets are perhaps the best poems in the book. In one, "A Queenless Hive," he depicts the ravages of the wax moth, imagines himself dwarfed to the stature of a bee and explores the deserted hive:

I climb from cell to cell like nimble gnome.
Layer upon layer the visored dead I see,
In monumental corridors of comb.

He has a pretty wit also with vegetables and actually writes a sonnet to a cabbage (and many modern painters have been struck with the same subject!):

Green rose of monstrous size and petalled leaf
The Caesars served with tongues of ortolan,
August pro-consul of our garden clan,
Honoured as England's vegetable chief.

Will anyone be surprised that in a line or so further on Mr. Stokes "had no coupons valid for roast beef?"

A strange little book which may prove to be a piece for weekend collectors is Mr. E. S. Hole's *Sanity Rare,* an "Essay in Verse" divided into thirteen sections, the whole containing over six hundred quatrains of paired decasyllabic couplets. Sections entitled "The Coils of Commerce" and "The Snare of Science" indicate Mr. Hole's plan. Most of the verses have in them an irrefutable commonsense, but their perky triteness inevitably reminds me of the "Proverbial Philosophy" of the once stupendously popular Martin Tupper. Nothing escapes Mr. Hole: verse, art, politics, science, ethics, truth, right and logic all supply grist to his mill. He drips with incontrovertible truths which the world is certain to ignore:

Thus art and beauty, symmetry and grace
May charm, adorn—but not protect a race!
What is deduced from these sad words of mine?
Abandon culture? No! Its form define!

If I didn't hate definitions I should cry "Hear, hear!"

Finally there is Miss Carol Stewart's anthology, *Poems of Sleep and Dream*, richly if not at all felicitously illustrated by Mr. Robert Colquhoun's ultra-modern lithographs. The irreverent might say that the poems are chosen to lull the sleepless to sleep and the lithographs to keep them awake. Like Picasso, Mr. Colquhoun is being collected, and if, again like that master, his creations sometimes baffle me, it is a bafflement of distinction. With the poems themselves there can be no demur. I am always glad to see old friends and enjoy curious reminders; and Miss Stewart's charming catholicity, whilst inclining to past centuries (when the poets—those who kept their heads—maybe slept better at night than we do) gathers in Auden's lovely "Lay your sleeping head, my love" between Donne and Chapman, and De la Mare's "Sleep" between two

of Blake's tenderest lyrics. I am grateful to Miss Stewart also for including Christina Rossetti's strange poem, "My Dream," in which a king crocodile with "an execrable appetite" battened upon his punier brethren until:

> The luscious fat distilled upon his chin,
> Exuded from his nostrils and his eyes,
> While still like hungry death he fed his maw . . .

which makes a pleasant thought on which to seek repose; and, so far as I can follow Mr. Colquhoun on the opposite page, the poet's dream is all somehow bound up with mummy cases and birds of ill omen.

LIMITATION AND POSSIBILITY

BY

DEREK STANFORD

"The Harp of Aeolus" by Geoffrey Grigson, (Routledge, 15s. net); "A Southern Vanguard" edited by Allen Tate, (Prentice Hall, 4$.50); "The Muses' Darling" by Charles Norman, (Falcon Press, 12s. 6d.); "Walter de la Mare" by John Atkins, (C. & J. Temple, 4s.); "The Novels of George Meredith" by Sir Osbert Sitwell, (English Association, 1s. net).

The word romanticism, like the word liberty, has been so dragged through the mire of circumstance, distorted so often in an attempt to make it square with the passing needs of history, that any exact or single meaning has long since been lost to it. Like its Siamese opposite, classicism, it is something of a many-headed freak of nature, This term, which has variously connoted the attitude in art of independence, of individualism, of personal sentiment, or even of crude and impersonal sensationalism, is once more defined by implication in Mr. Grigson's new book of essays.

Comprising a group of eleven studies in eighteenth and nineteenth century verse and painting, and ending with two on contemporary themes, "The Harp of Aeolus" may be described as an endeavour to localise and gauge the romantic impulse as manifest in the phases through which it has passed.

Briefly speaking, Mr. Grigson distinguishes four observances, conditioning the course of art from the eighteenth century till today. The first of these may be termed an art of truth to principle, the second an art of truth to self, the third an art of truth to nature, and the fourth an art of truth to environment. The first, with its sense of an ordered universe, of man as a reasoning animal, and nature as a kind of divine geometry, gave

us Augustan classicism. The second phase—most readily digested in Zola's description of art as "nature seen through a temperament"—constitutes romanticism. The third, subduing the heart to the eye, and placing detail before the facts of feeling, produced pre-Raphaelite naturalism, and paved the way for that final phase in which both the artist and the man are seen as victims of time and place—as half-conscious pawns of materialism.

As Mr. Grigson sees it, the essence of romanticism resides in the balance maintained between the claims of the artist's feelings and those of the objects by which he expresses them. When this "optimum fusion of man and his environment" (to use the words of J. F. Hendry) is established the result is a vital kind of art, in which the correspondences and relationships of things is most potently evident. As an example of this capacity to project one's feelings into nature and thus find there the requisite images which shall serve to objectify one's state, while still at the same time respecting the actual contours of reality about them, Mr. Grigson cites the use which Coleridge makes of that phenomenon called The Glory—"the halo one sees, in the rainbow colours, round the head of one's shadow when it is projected by a rising or a setting sun down on the mist"—in a poem on Sara Hutchinson and in his famous "Ode on Dejection." Here, declares the critic, the image is no mere empty figure of flattery, "no generalised superlative," but a metaphor bred from that "double vision" which William Blake spoke of and practised.

When the claims of truth to feeling or natural fact out-strip each other we get an art which is cold and passive, lop-sided, top-heavy, or wildly unreal. As an example of the first aberration, Mr. Grigson cites Constable—a painter who was more of a reflector than projector, or one who although excited by nature finally failed to render nature exciting. Constable, it is true, he admits, did succeed in projecting certain of his moods into his landscapes, so that they became tinged with suggestion. What, however, he failed to transcribe was a sense of his personality as a whole. Beside the epileptic colours of van Gogh or the plastic contours and unity of Courbet, the canvases of Constable are weak—a sort of only semi-human, semi-photographic painting.

At the other end of the scale, Mr. Grigson picks on Dylan Thomas to represent what we may call the art of solipsist isolation. This arises when the artist ignores both the claims of external reality and tradition, relying upon his egotism to make good the gap which these would have filled. "The self in Mr. Thomas' poems," Mr. Grigson roundly asserts, "seems inhuman and glandular"; aesthetically speaking, a kind of amoeba. This most recent of reactions to the stone-cold materialist attitude in art is not as Mr. Grigson maintains, a rebirth of romanticism; for if this last approach properly consists in an aesthetic of truth to self—an integrity towards one's personal vision, together with an equal respect for the

undistorted nature of things in themselves—the claims of Mr. Thomas and Mr. George Barker as leaders of such a renaissance are speedily to be dismissed. Firstly, the self which they so parade is something inconstant and protean; not a self, but a kind of anti-self or sub-self; not a psyche, but rather an articulate ganglion. Secondly, as to nature in their poems—the authentic correspondence of image to object—both Mr. Barker and Mr. Thomas possess too much poetic pride and *amour-propre* ever to let them play the botanist as Mr. Grigson would have them do. Theirs is the grandiloquent art of blowing the trumpet of the *id.*

In conclusion, it must be allowed that Mr. Grigson writes with all his old degree of prejudice and polemical sparkle. What he approves of he knows how to praise: what meets with his disfavour calls forth his condemnation. Exacting research and the passing of years have certainly, however, done much to mature this quondam doctrinaire of "New Verse."

Whilst this last volume may be described as an anthology of postscripts upon the history of romanticism, the next work—"A Southern Vanguard" edited by Allen Tate—may be considered as an addition to our stock of ideas about the nature of classicism.

Now if we tentatively agree to define the essence of the former attitude in art as one of possibility and the essence of the second attitude as one of limitation; implying by this that the romantic artist tends to regard the aim of his art as being the fullest aspiration of the spirit, while the classical artist believes his aim to lie in the strictest consolidation of form, John Peale Bishop's essay on "Poetry and Painting" in this Southern collection will force us to modify our hypothetical formulas.

Briefly, the late Mr. Bishop maintains that this classical cardinal principle or check—namely, the sense of limitation—must be equally applied to the claims of form as it has been in the past to the demands of content. In other words, in that work of art which is, most truly speaking, classical, the demands of expression and formalisation, of technique and theme, must be properly balanced. According to this course of reasoning, the poet who concentrates all his faculties upon the development of technique is not to be considered as a classical artist.

At this point, the late Mr. Bishop makes a statement which leads me, in my turn, to suggest that a vital distinction be made between the pure and the abstract artist. "The pure poet," he argues, "is one for whom a poetic solution is possible for any problem which his life imposes upon him." In other words, the pure poet is the complete or consistent artist; while the abstract poet, being one for whom an artistic solution is possible only for an extremely limited number of problems and experiences (and those already of an aesthetic nature) which his life imposes upon him is, in reality, the fragmentary, the incomplete and inconsistent artist.

Now although the logic of these conclusions offers an excellent corrective to much uninspired "experimental" verse, the poems to be

found beside it in this volume hardly realise the critic's high teaching, lacking as they do that double discipline exercised by passion and patience.

For the one single essay by the late Peale Bishop, and another on "The Southern Quality" by Mr. Herbert Marshall McLuhan—a veritable arsenal of audacious provocations—the volume, none the less, rewards all obstacles concerning transatlantic purchase.

"The Muses' Darling" by Charles Norman is also a work of American criticism, but one of an entirely different order. This book which attempts to half-dramatise those few facts and documents extant relating to the life of Christopher Marlowe is a work of somewhat mixed virtues. In short, we may call it a living book; which term must not be taken to imply that "The Muses' Darling" is a book that will live, or even a particularly lively one. One merit and strength it has, however, which enables the reader to peruse it with pleasure in spite of all its weaknesses; namely, that attraction resulting from that fact that the subject has thoroughly interested its author.

Here, a word or two must be said about the nature of this interest; for while it is clearly of an absorbing quality, it remains to a large degree unanalytic; being focused, as it were, upon a half-imaginary or semi-idealised image. To put this in another way, we can say that Mr. Norman's interest in Marlowe is neither that of historian, psychologist, nor literary critic; and that when he makes statements upon these three levels his remarks are not of a penetrating order. "Those who know the complexities of man," he readily admits, "may be able to explain" those problems and issues he has left undecided. "The Muses' Darling," then, is a showman's book—the work of an impressario. Considered in this light, it is seen to possess many qualities desirable to its kind. Written with zest, it conveys enthusiasm; presenting Marlowe, Kyd, and Greene in a forceful lurid fashion. It is prose melodrama, disguised as history, with the throttle of sensation and effects full open.

With regard to the style of Mr. Norman's prose, it is of that sort which can best be described as rococo-impressionist-sublime; and combined as it is with many quotations from Marlowe's own storehouse of mighty lines, the reader may feel that the subject in itself was rich enough already in furious purples to dispense with any further high colouring-matter.

In conclusion, although "The Muses' Darling" cannot be considered as a work of the same importance on Marlowe as Miss Ellis-Fermor's book, published in 1926, it offers an admirable introduction in an attractive and popular form to the first great "doubting Thomas" of the Elizabethan stage.

From the very first paragraph of Mr. Atkin's study we know that we are dealing with the prose of a poet, the critical prose of a creative writer —prehensile, intuitive, atmospheric. Observing the term "an exploration," by which John Atkins describes his little book, we anticipate,

correctly, a discursive kind of treatment, employing not the sequences of reason, but the swifter "logic of the imagination." Here, for example, are just two points, two exact and intuitive bulls-eyes scored by the writer whose subject in this study is the prose, not the verse, of Walter de la Mare: "I do not think de la Mare possesses "incantation," but he goes beyond to its results: revery and hypnosis. He does not so much follow Poe's style as apply his own individual style to Poe-like subjects" and "What he has done, in effect, is to establish the existence of a subterranean link between horror and beauty. This Poe never did."

Like Lawrence writing on Hardy and Galsworthy, Mr. Atkins on de la Mare tells us as much about himself as his subject. Neither, in this case, do we resent it, for his style is resonant with conviction. "Walter de la Mare: an exploration" provides an interesting brief consideration of the social aspect of its subject author's prose. It can also be read as an urgent tract on the principle of the imagination. The importance of this book is out of all proportion to its neat, attractive, but limited size.

Sir Osbert Sitwell as a critic is sometimes suggestive of an after-dinner Pater: his style has a kind of post-prandial glow. Here, in his presidential address for 1947 to the English Association his subject is perfectly suited to him: the Country House ethos of Meredith's novels. In an era of scarcity such prose is caviare.

THE YOUNG ADONAIS

(A note on some early poems and fragments of John Keats.)

BY

ANEURIN RHYS

Poetry and youth have been allies as long as youth and the critics have been at daggers drawn. Premature publication of adolescent verses has more than once meant the slaughter of poetic ambition by the bodkins of intolerant pundits while, on the other hand, astringent self-criticism has often dictated the destruction of boyish inspirations, or caution has put them by until assured fame allowed the publication, without detriment, of the "early poems."

We do not hear of Keats destroying much that he wrote and he published early—at twenty-two—and persevered, in spite of violent dispraise, until his all too early death. Reference is nevertheless often made to his "early poems," presumably those poems contained in Keats's first published volume of 1817, with possibly, the still immature "Endymion" of the next year; all those poems, in fact, which Lockhart, in "Blackwood's Magazine," had damned in general, and 'the calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy of "Endymion" ' in particular. These poems, after only a cursory examination, do not bear comparison

with the poems of the 1820 volume—the "Isabella," "Lamia," "Eve of St. Agnes," the "Hyperion" and the Odes, and may well be termed early poems both in chronology and attainment.

"Load every rift with ore," Keats used to say, and countless memorable lines spring to mind in approval of, or, rather, in association with that utterance. But Keats did not suddenly burst forth with such splendours after a period of "inhuman dearth," as it were, of noble lines. When it is remembered that the 1817 volume contained (besides the fragment of "I Stood Tip-Toe" and "Sleep and Poetry") the majority of his sonnets, one cannot but look into these pieces the more closely to see where the spark of Keats's genius first caught the waiting tinder of his poetry. Reading the sonnets alone we see clearly the unmistakable imprint of Adonais.

The dedicatory sonnet to Leigh Hunt which Keats wrote the night before the volume went to press, while his friends were "noisily conversing," begins magnificently (Keats was always a master of beginnings) with—

> Glory and loveliness have passed away,

and, if the ending is weak, there is a note in the sonnet irresistibly reminiscent of the greater glory of the Odes.

> No crowd of nymphs soft-voiced and young, and gay,
> In woven baskets bringing ears of corn.

That is unmistakably the Keats of the "Ode to a Grecian Urn."

"Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there" is another impressive beginning, but it is astonishing to find it closely followed by such a line as—

> The stars look very cold about the sky,

coupled with a pair of poor phrases such as "silver lamps" (for the stars) and "home's pleasant lair."

There are two further lines in the sonnet which afford some recompense for its obvious improvisation, two lines out of four lines of catalogue, a trick in which Keats later seldom fell short of Milton:

> Of fair-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress
> And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd,

far more successful than—

> Of lovely Laura in her light green dress
> And faithful Petrarch gloriously crown'd.

The much admired "To One Who Has Been Long in Populous City Pent," despite its opening, reads rather dully until one reaches the now hackneyed final simile—

> E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
> That falls through the clear ether silently,

and does not bear comparison with Milton's lines in "Paradise Lost" which it is supposed greatly to resemble.

It is with the sonnet "On first looking into Chapman's Homer" that we come to a sonnet which impresses in its entirety and from which we do not tend to detach some portion as the real source of the poem's beauty.

More perfect still is the sonnet "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket," written in competition with Leigh Hunt. Cowden Clarke records Hunt's reactions on reading Keats's contribution: "His sincere look of pleasure at the first line—'The poetry of earth is never dead'." "Such a prosperous opening," he said, and when he came to the tenth and eleventh lines:

On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence—

"Ah! that's perfect! Bravo Keats!"

The sonnet "When I have Fears that I may cease to be," by virtue of its prophetic nature, has gained a renown perhaps not altogether due to it as poetry, but it, too, has memorable lines: such as—

When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance.

* * * * *

The opening poem of the 1817 volume, "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill," written in 1816, shows more than any other the faults of Keats's early work, due partly, of course, to immaturity, partly to the influence of Leigh Hunt's poetic style. Keats has not sure control over his rhymes, and sometimes too obviously introduces words only for the sake of sound. There is, often, in his diction, a slackness and lack of polish akin to the "airy and genteel vulgarity" and "parlour tone" of Hunt's verse. If the poem is read aloud it must be noticed that many—too many—lines fall below the level of great poetry. It seems strange that a poet who can write—

Had not yet lost those starry diadems,
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn,

and—

A little noiseless noise among the leaves,

could be satisfied with—

I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started,

or—

A bush of May-flowers with the bees about them;
Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them.

It is in this poem, nevertheless, that Keats proves he did have that ability to "load every rift with ore," to star and gem his verse with jewels and light.

A filbert hedge with wildbriar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
Upon their summer thrones; there too should be
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree.

Such lines as these remind us of that heaped-up beauty which Keats achieved so splendidly in "The Eve of St. Agnes" and the Odes. It is done again in "Sleep and Poetry":

> Stop and consider! Life is but a day;
> A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way
> From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
> While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
> Of Montmorenci.

"Knowing within myself the manner in which this poem has been produced," wrote Keats in the Preface to "Endymion," "it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished."

It is not surprising, in view of Keats's own opinion, that "Endymion" was adversely criticised. Shelley, while admitting that it was "full of the highest and finest gleams of poetry," considered that much praise was due to him for having read it. There can be no justification, however, for the bitterness of contemporary attacks upon it. There is much in the poem that is poor: there is a great deal also that carries further the increasing evidence of Keats's gift which we have noted in other early poetry. The opening we all know and cherish:

> A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
> Therefore on every morrow are we wreathing
> A flowery band to bind us to the earth . . .

In the second part is that glorious catalogue of nature's wonders which invests the hymn to Pan with all the magic of Keats's "teeming" retina:

> O thou, to whom
> Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom
> Their ripened fruitage: yellow girted bees
> Their golden honey-combs; our village leas
> Their fairest-blossom'd beans and poppied corn;
> The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
> To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries
> Their summer coolness; pent-up butterfles
> Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding year
> All its completions . . .

"Load every rift with ore": by 1818 Keats had not yet fully accomplished this purpose, but he was far on his way.

JOHN REDWOOD ANDERSON: AN APPRECIATION

BY

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

One of my earliest enthusiasms in twentieth-century verse arose when, several years after its publication in 1904, I came across a slim paper-bound volume entitled *The Music of Death.* Apparently it was well-received by the critics, but neither that book nor *The Legend of Eros and Psyche* (1908) appears in the fly-lists of Mr. Redwood Anderson's publications. But the boy is father of the man, and in these two sensitive and tenderly-wrought products of a rare talent the student who has the inclination may find sure indications of the poet's influences and preferences. Obviously, he was saturated with Shelley; and his heartfelt dedication of the first volume to Emile Verhaeren—who influenced so many young Englishmen—points to his assimilation of something of the spiritual nostalgia which characterises the Belgian's verse. From one of Mr. Redwood Anderson's teen-age poems, "The Two Weavers", I quote lines which may be regarded as the first steps in his spiritual journey:

> And man looks at this web, of light and dark entangled,
> (All dark in the night),
> This web of peace and strife,
> Of sorrow and delight—
> Man looks at this web, with pain and mirth bespangled,
> And calls it "Life".

And already, in *Eros and Psyche,* he was turning classic myths to metaphysical account. This is Eros speaking:

> "All forms, all shapes are mine; yet unconfined
> By any form or shape. I am the Soul,
> The Life of the vast Universe; the Mind
> Of everlasting Nature, and the goal
> Of ev'ry denizen of earth. For blind
> Am I, but as succeeding ages roll,
> Watch the revolving worlds with sleepless eyes,
> The Guardian of their mighty destinies!"

The preoccupation is there, as it still is more intensely and even frighteningly four decades later, with the spiritual meaning of life, with Man's place and God's place in the Universe.

But, let me say at once: I would far rather treat of Mr. Redwood Anderson as a poet than as a mystic (he would, in any case, I think, hate a label so capable of loose interpretation). I should be on surer

ground with the one than the other. Yet, if the term can roughly be taken to mean one who seeks to penetrate things remote from or beyond human understanding, it applies to him more, perhaps, than to any other living poet. The poet and mystic are indeed in him inseparable. It may be true of all humanity that heaven lies about us in our infancy, but from his youth to the present day Mr. Redwood Anderson has been content with nothing less than a profound investigation of the cosmological idea. He will take nothing on chance. Like Dante, like Blake, his soul walks where there are no known tracks; but he will describe his journey nevertheless. He sends his soul through the Invisible, *not* some letter of the After-life to spell but to trace the very origins and core and purpose of the Absolute in the Infinite—that abstraction which is and governs the Universe, in which—brief particles—we live and move and have our being. And it is the measure of his audacity and grandeur as a poet that he is unflinching in speculations which have baffled the greatest philosophers in all ages. I cannot go with him in these speculations, they are not in my habit of mind; for me, as I have written:

> Each is a world and each
> Godlike and like a clod,
> Within, beyond the reach
> Of his own will of God.

For me, when I have tried to grapple with such conceptions as a Divine Organism who is the One life of the World, who is the *Logos*, the Absolute, and the Totality of Conscious Being, who seeks to satisfy its eternal hunger and thirst for experience in the Living Universe, or rather, in an infinite system of Universes; for me, the miracle and experience of sentient life on this earth is sufficient. God, in my finite thought includes Nature, and beyond Nature I cannot see. But it is of the essence of Mr. Redwood Anderson's intellect and spirit that he must probe and speculate into and upon the Cosmos, and we must understand this if we would justly appreciate his work.

I pass over a dozen rewarding books from the pen of this remarkable poet and come, for the chief purpose of this article, to *Paris Symphony* (1947) and the three volumes making *Triptych* (1946-7), the panels of which are respectively entitled "Approach", "The Fugue of Time", and "An Ascent".

In the September-October, 1947, issue of this *Review* I noted the air of intellectual music pervading *Paris Symphony*—its theme, the Music of Human Life as it strives through time undaunted towards an unattainable ideal of Perfection. The poem revolves, as Mr. John Cowper Powys says in his Foreword, "round the deeply religious idea of a tragic and cosmic struggle going on for ever", that struggle of contrasts and opposites which humanity can do so little to influence. The work is built upon the

model of a classical symphony. In form it is lyrical and unrhymed, varying an imagistic precision of phrase with a repetitive rhetorical cadence. The Aphrodite of Melos is the poet's symbol of Perfection, the Winged Victory of Samothrace is his symbol of Human Striving. The one:

> Unintellectual,
> still, cold perfection,
> brow of all certitude,
> eyes of blind beauty,
> and lips of peace.

and the other:

> leaning
> into the bitter winds of fate:
> there is a storm
> hidden in every fold and sweep
> of your tumultuous dress,
> a storm,
> faced and o'ercome,
> in the sublime endeavour and cold wrath
> of your majestic limbs.
>
> ... ...
>
> Your wings, swept back,
> are as a mighty triumph
> over the terror of millennial gales.

The poem has in it a certitude of beauty and an awareness of suffering which lift it above the contemporary exercise-work of so many equally accomplished technicians who lack a noble theme. Its writer is not ashamed to weep over the bitterness and sorrow and frustration in the world, over:

> the two arms of Humanity,
> crying, like blood from the earth's dust,
> for vengeance and for pity.

He must record his vision, as those immortal sculptors did so many centuries ago, he must add his phrase to the rune of Ideal Aspiration.

Paris Symphony is more compact and instantly comprehensible than *Triptych*. But to say that this work requires long and close study is to ask for it no more than is due to any work of art which is also a profound adventure in thought. Admittedly it is difficult, but so is Dante's *Divina Commedia,* and Milton's *Paradise Lost,* and Blake's "prophetic books". The years have hallowed these and made of them fields for commentary and exposition, but *Triptych* is still fresh with us and has not yet been

expounded to the extent, say, of that other adventure of a human spirit, Mr. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. The next few years may, I think, give Mr. Redwood Anderson's masterpiece a comparable importance.

The left-hand panel, "Approach", may be taken to represent the approach of the soul to God along each of the three traditional paths, (*a*) Mystical Love, (*b*) Will, embodied in the conception of duty, and (*c*) Truth-seeking. For Mystical Love the poet re-tells the story of Radha and Krishna from the Bhagavad Gita: the Hindu equivalent of the Christian conception of the communion of the soul with Christ, the revelation and conferment of blessedness by God incarnate through the utter self-surrender of the worshipper. Radha sees her divine lover as a moon-bright mist, inescapable, waylaying every thought:

> I will recall the things of sight and sound,
> taste, touch and smell—bulwark my fear with fact:
> hedge my soul with the senses, so none may pierce
> the quick-set thicket of reasonable shapes
> guarding me, and no miracle cleave way
> for God into my shrinking solitudes.

In memorable passages of extreme sensuous beauty, passing from blank verse into four measures of rhymed dance-dialogue, Radha's act of complete surrender to Krishna is accomplished, and she knows unutterable bliss before she finds herself again alone:

> Thy face is not man's face, and on thy brow
> the Illimitable thrones; thy limbs,
> made manifold, reach to the extreme rims
> of being, and thy dancing fills
> and is, the universe.

For the approach through Will Mr. Redwood Anderson turns to the Greek hero, Heracles, making him soliloquise and exhort in four hundred lines of blank verse on the occasion of his death on the funeral pyre. He had failed, through pride and lust and anger, but now he willed to redeem himself by the supreme self-sacrifice. He knew he had been:

> host to some diviner thing
> than lodged in the common hostelries of men:
> some gift sacring my days . . .

He had thought to:

> Channel this strength
> to the world's benefit; be, in man's small measure,
> what God to man immeasurably is;
> redeem the wilderness and the waste spirit,
> till both in a green May exclaim his praise . . .

but over and again he had failed, and as he mounts the pyre he cries:

> in this, at the least, I will not fail: I give
> this body of my destruction to be destroyed . . .
> . . . Time, thou hast no more power
> upon me! Never can I fail again.

For the approach through Truth Mr. Redwood Anderson has gone to the Norse mythology. He has pieced together hints and legendary fragments to evolve characterised conceptions of Odin (the Thinker), Thor (the brute-Hero: a variation of the Heracles theme), Mimir (the World's Memory), and Ymir (Nature or Matter). Brooding high above the world Odin sees:

> ingathering from the storm-horizoned years,
> doom darker than night, darker than death. For death
> still leaves, like the pod shrivelled with spiked frosts,
> seed for new dawn of living; but thought peers blinded
> past this world-ruin and harnessed vengeance of time;
> the future cowls her meaning with drooped lids
> and the dumb mouth gives not one sign of hope.

But here, it seems to me, is the weakness of the anthropomorphic conception of gods; for when, failing to get any comfort from Thor, Odin questions Mimir and is reminded of his own creation of the world "from the cold bulk of Ymir", I find myself boggling at the idea of a Creator demanding to know the truth about his own creation. "What good?" *Cui bono?* Would Odin, the Thinker, the Intellect, the All-Knowing, need to ratiocinate in the manner of Man, in a vain attempt to establish and define his own origins and powers? The mind staggers before the conception—if I understand Mr. Redwood Anderson aright—of a series of linked autonomous universes. We are perhaps too far in time and science to resurrect these bewildered dead gods, even in the symbolic cosmography of a modern poet. The questions put into the mouth of Odin are more properly Man's:

> Then who has built the engines of my nature?
> What set the pendulum of thought swinging
> from darkness into darkness, to tick out
> the mind's night, and with slow monotony
> measure the round of doubt?

Yet see what results in sheer poetry:

> Infinite snow crusting these wrinkled seas
> ice-fast for ever: infinite, under the thin
> skies: infinite, to the earth's empty rim.
> The static dawn flares like a conflagration;

nature lies dead on the cold paps of time;
no movement, save the drive of clouds; no voice
save the wind's wordless sorrow.

The second or middle panel of the *Triptych*, "The Fugue of Time", can best be described by the author, as "an imaginative presentation of the World-Process seen, as it were, from the inside: that is, as the self-realization of the Divine Activity and the content of the Divine Experience." It is pantheistic with a difference, and might be called an Inverted Vedântism: that is, it is Yea-saying not Nay-saying; Life-asserting, instead of Life renouncing and denying; western, not eastern.

Believing that *vital* truth, in the sum-total of human perception and experience, has lived on much longer in the form of myth than in intellectual processes, Mr. Anderson in this panel—as in so much of his work—has built his argument on a frame of mythological allusion. He would contend that the reader, merely as a European human being, carries myths, or their "meanings", deeply lodged within him. What he seeks to arouse is the reverberation of an unconscious music in the reader's soul, more than any conscious and scholarly understanding in his mind. So he uses myth symbolically, somewhat as the Oedipus story has been used in modern analytical psychology; and what emerges from his employment of a whole apparatus of Indian, Scandinavian, Christian and Dionysian myth is the realization of God as the World; the World, as such, ceasing to exist as an end in itself but, in its entirety,—Man, the Individual, and Mankind, the mass,—forming part of the divine "organism" of God's "orchestral consciousness".

But any attempt in a brief space to summarise the poet's argument must fail. Sufficient for me if I indicate the nature of the work for which—*and this to us here is the important thing*—a poetic form was sought. And in this poetic form what beauties shine! This is the Sun (Helios) speaking:

And thou, O World, that art my soul's delight,
lovely among thy brethren, in whom alone
that seed, that impulse sown
broadcast throughout the universe of old,
rises to its sweet flowering: thou in whom
God's thought grows disentangled from the gloom
and war of Nature: in whose holiest, Life
throws down the battered weapons of her strife,
and with clean hands turns all her might
into an empire of maternal pain,
that on the earth may burn again
the interstellar splendours of the night—
not star to star, but spirit to spirit, bound,
year unto year, and all the glad earth round,

in the close mesh of love! Behold,
I clothe thee with my glory: fold
over thy limbs my cloak of joyous light;

And this, when man's precursor (symbolically a Centaur) suddenly acquires an immortal soul:

I throw out tendrils of swift sight
to seize the earth, to reach the sun,
take hold about me of the hills and trees,
the mountain's snow, the foam of seas,
the low clouds swinging through the skies,
the grass, the pool, the flower, the stream—
tendrils to link the depths and height
and breadth of all the world in one;
I wake, as from some scattered dream
of beauty shadowed in the mind,
to find
day for the windy candles of my night,
and, for my fragmentary light,
a shining world made whole.

I come then to the third, the right-hand panel of *Triptych*, to "An Ascent", which, in its sheer concentrated quality of *vision*, is to me the most remarkable portion of the work. The author describes it as repeating the subject of the first book—the approach of the soul to God—but here the approach is not "by any of the traditional paths, but is conceived in the form of a passage of spiritual biography." It is shot through and through with Christian mysticism and symbolism, but bears evidence of a continuous intellectual hunger—for that truth for which "faith" is no final substitute. "An Ascent" is a vision in blank verse—blank verse, moreover, of a very individual order, with many long lines leaping with the flow of the author's thought and emotion. As the poet of "Pearl", and Langland before him—as Dante and Tennyson, and so many other poets —Mr. Redwood Anderson uses the machinery of a dream. He is in his room in the city, among his books:

mute company
that looked refusal of the gift my heart
perpetually craved.
. . . like rocks
where dead thoughts lay in their close layers embedded—
stones, where I cried for bread . . .

and as he rises to bring his lamp and gropes for the door-knob the vision comes upon him, a tremendous flash of revelatory experience for which

the dazed mind so often fails to find an adequate description. He finds himself "in a bare world of heath empty and silent", approaching a pylon bearing the words Alpha and Omega, from which a small path leads. What follows is Dantean in conception: bogs, mountains, gulfs of :

> a profound blackness precipitously down:
> narrow in span, and like a hole driven
> into the strata'd core of time . . .

peopled with groaning tentacular horrors. He climbs a mountain, wields a sword, sees a phantom city, and has the sense of presences about him. He meets characters of history and legend, among them his own Dead, his father and his mother—who are also Adam and Eve. And as he follows this woman-presence a change comes over her face:

> "O, who art thou?"
> I whispered. "Earth", the whispered answer came,
> "and thou art still my well-belovèd son."

She opens a door and as they go through she becomes the Virgin of the World, Maya, and Muth, and Rhea, and he is left alone before the unscalable face of a cliff to which is fastened:

> . . . the frail ladder, rung on rung, ascending
> into the wailing darkness and the storm.

It is of such vivid suspense-elements that this vision is compounded. The verse is often terrifying in its dreadful actuality, the mind reels as it does before the piled effects of Dante's *Inferno,* and the reader is made to recognize that this poet who is living amongst us to-day must be measured by great standards. He may perhaps be the last considerable poet of our century who will employ ancient symbols and allegories—the tendency to-day is to invent new symbols or to strip old ones of their sense and trappings and give them modern dress—but there can be no doubt as to the power and beauty of the poetry in which they appear. My difficulty indeed, in reporting on the *Triptych,* has been to select lines for quotation when so much is admirable. But certainly no finer passage occurs than this—before the vision ends and the poet feels again the familiar door-knob in his twilit room:

> I was a Nail
> that held a parchment to a stake of wood,
> and, on the parchment, bold in the world's eye,
> the Name and Title of a King proclaimed.
> I heard the moan of flesh in agony;
> the sound of women weeping; and the jeers
> of angry multitudes.
> I was a Bird,
> a white Bird, like a pictured Holy Ghost,

that hung above a monstrous crucifix:
millions of miles, until sight fainted, plunged
that terrible upright; millions of miles, the beam
swept space. There was a Figure nailed below me,
naked and crowned—and all the Universe,
thirsting, with its innumerable mouths
from the red fountains of salvation drank.
Around his loins there was a yellow scarf
blowing in the wind; and, as I watched it,
it turned into a river of pale light
circling a tower: into a river of stars.
I was no more a Nail: no more a Bird:
I was a Child; and Someone in his arms
bore me . . .
. . . and so, surrendering
all to that Love that yet might hinder love,
I exercised love's last prerogative
and, with the thought *I am not*!, ceased to be.

I do not know where, since Christina Rossetti and Francis Thompson, religious ecstasy rises in modern English poetry to a greater height than in this noble passage. It is but one instance of this poet's power in a work of majestic design and execution. His is a strange voice to be heard in these bewildered years; he concedes nothing to his day and generation, and nothing to himself in the unflinching service of an ideal. It may seem from what I have written that he is a mystic first and last, but I am convinced that Poetry is the mainspring of his life, his constant thought and occupation. He is one who strives to live at all times the life of the imagination, adventuring ceaselessly into the uttermost regions of thought, so only that he can bring back some word or phrase, some shape of power or beauty, with which to enrich the temple of his dedication. He needs must love the highest when he sees it, and for him that highest is the Quest of the Absolute, a quest which at times gives to his work that too intense focus which dizzies the less mystically-minded reader. But whether he treads supernal arcs or threads the ways of earth, John Redwood Anderson is one of the finest progressive-traditionalist poets of the century. He will be read when many more famous contemporaries are forgotten.

HUMOUR IN THE "DIVINA COMMEDIA"

BY

BARBARA REYNOLDS

"*The poet was without humour*". (*H. A. L. Fisher*).

". . . *the tight-lipped Dante who probably never saw a joke in all his life.*" (*Ernest Newman*).

"*My laughter, ancient one, moves you perchance to wonder.*" (*Dante*).

In the year 1921, a volume of essays on Dante was published in England in commemoration of the sixth centenary of his death. In one of these, entitled "Humour in Dante", the author, Lonsdale Ragg, makes this statement:—

> "We believe that Professor Sannia was right in his main contention, when in 1909 he claimed that the popular tradition of a humourless Dante is a travesty and a libel. Dante was at once too great and too human to be devoid of this saving grace. . . ."

Twenty-seven years have passed since Lonsdale Ragg made this contribution to a fuller enjoyment of Dante's work, and yet we find the legend of a humourless Dante still being perpetuated. There is no need, however, to wait another seventeen years, until the seventh centenary of Dante's birth, before this ghost is laid. All that is required is an unprejudiced reading of certain episodes in the *Divina Commedia,* provided there is present in the reader some measure of the attribute in which Dante is so often said to be lacking.

First, let us consider the function of ridicule in Dante's *Inferno*. The Florentines knew the value of derision in putting their civic defaulters to shame. They had an entertaining way in the 13th century of painting caricatures on buildings of people who had not paid their taxes. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Dante deals in a similar manner with some of his sinners, notably the Swindlers, who are punished in the fifth ditch of the eighth circle of Hell. This whole episode, which begins in Canto XXI, is a comedy scene, and very robust comedy it is. The souls of the swindlers suffer the torment of immersion in boiling pitch, not an amusing punishment, certainly, but Dante is intent on describing it from the outset in derisive terms. The bulky forms of the sinners are poked down beneath the surface of the pitch, just as meat is poked down by cooks into a cauldron:

> "Non altrimenti i cuoci a' lor vassalli
> fanno attuffare in mezzo la caldaia
> la carne con li uncin, perchè non galli." (1)

(1) *Inferno*, xxi, 55-57.

(Not otherwise do cooks direct their underlings to plunge the meat deep into the cauldron with their hooks, so that it does not float upon the surface.)

The troop of devils employed in this way are called by names which have been shown to be a ludicrous distortion of names of contemporary Italians, some of them prominent in local politics, a lively extension of the use of caricature already mentioned. Even if this were not so, the very names of this band of devils, under their leader, Malacoda, have considerable comedy value. Malacoda calls for "ten volunteers" to escort Dante and Virgil to the place where they may supposedly cross to the next ditch:—

" 'Tra'ti avante, Alichino, e Calcabrina,'
cominciò elli a dire, 'e tu, Cagnazzo,
e Barbariccia guida la decina.
Libicocco vegn' oltre, e Draghignazzo,
Ciriatto sannuto e Graffiacane
e Farfarello e Rubicante pazzo . . .' " (1)

("Come forward Alichino and Calcabrina," he began, "and you, Cagnazzo, and Barbariccia lead the squad of ten. Libicocco come forth, and Draghignazzo, fanged Ciriatto, and Graffiacane and Farfarello, and mad Rubicante . . .")

The final touch of *Rubicante pazzo* must have been more than Dante could bear. Malacoda's reassurance could make little impression on him after that:

" 'Gite con lor, che non saranno rei!" (2)

("Go along with them, they won't hurt you.")

Dante has serious misgivings and appeals to Virgil:

" 'Ohmè, maestro, che è quel ch'i veggio?'
. . . 'Deh, sanza scorta andianci soli,
se tu sa' ir, ch'i'per me non la cheggio. . . .
. . . non vedi tu ch' e' digrignan li denti,
e con le ciglia ne minaccian duoli?' " (3)

("Oh my! Master, what is this I see? Oh, let us proceed along without an escort if you know the way, for I, for my part, would rather do without. . . . Do you not see how they gnash their teeth and threaten us with black looks?")

The devils conduct a lively dialogue with one another as they receive the mute, inert form of some newly arrived sinner. Dante takes the opportunity of getting in a hit at the city of Lucca, for the devil who fetches the newly departed spirits comes running over the bridge, bearing on his shoulders a magistrate from that town:

(1) *Inferno*, xxi, 118-123. (2) Ibid, 117. (3) Ibid, 127-132.

" 'Mettetel sotto, ch'i' torno per anche
a quella terra ch'i'ho ben fornita . . .' " (1)

("Put him below, for I am off again to that town which I hear is full of them.")

Dante is too alarmed to laugh, but here, of course, as throughout the work, there are two Dantes, Dante the writer, who is creating the whole scene, complete with humorous touches, and Dante, the character, to whom he chooses to attribute more fear than amusement, involving him on occasion in considerable loss of dignity, and often poking fun at him for his timidity. In this scene, for instance, Virgil advances boldly across the bridge, to talk to the devils, leaving Dante peering from behind a rock. When Malacoda learns that the two newcomers are protected by divine power, his disappointment is so great that he drops his hook:—

"Allor li fu l'orgoglio sì caduto,
che si lasciò cascar l'uncino a' piedi . . ." (2)

Then Virgil calls to Dante: "You can come quite safely now from where you are squatting among the rocks on the bridge."

" . . . 'O tu che siedi
tra li scheggion del ponte quatto quatto,
sicuramente omai a me tu riedi.' " (3)

Does Mr. Newman not think that the "tight lips" of Dante the writer must have relaxed a little as he described himself sitting *quatto quatto* behind the rocks? And in the following lines, describing Dante the character standing timidly beside Virgil, while one of the devils says to the other:

". . . 'Vuo' che 'l tocchi'
. . . 'in sul groppone?' " (4)

("What do you say I poke him in the behind?")

did H. A. L. Fisher see only allegory?

There is, however, more to come.

The devils, to make up for their vexation at not being allowed to push Dante and Virgil into the pitch, have already decided on a means of tricking them, and so swift is the understanding that passes between Malacoda and the escort chosen to guide them to the next bridge, that the prospective victims, with their slower, more meditative minds, are incapable of perceiving it.

"See them safely to the next bridge", says Malacoda, "which spans the next ditch unbroken". And there passes between Malacoda and his minions a mediæval *Sez-you* which, to borrow a phrase from Aldous Huxley's essay on Swift, the niceties of the early twentieth century did not permit the editors of the Temple edition to translate.

(1) Ibid, 39-40. (2) Ibid, 85-86. (3) *Inferno*, xxi, 88-90. (4) Ibid, 100-101.

The company move off, and Dante, who though he may be slow in the up-take, is, at any rate, not deaf, finds himself thinking that surely no company of men-at-arms has ever set off to the tune of so strange a signal. He seems also inwardly amused to find himself in such company, he has got over his first fear, and is now in the state of mind of one who might say to himself: "What would they think at home if they could see me now?" Then, a shrug of the shoulders, and resignation to the inevitable, summed up in a remark that suggests quite a loose-lipped man of the world:

> "Ahi fiera compagnia! Ma nella chiesa
> coi santi, ed in taverna co' ghiottoni." (1)

(Alas what fierce company! But to church with the Saints and to the tavern with the gluttons.)

If it had not been for an unseemly squabble between two members of the escort of devils, Dante and Virgil would certainly have been pushed in among the swindlers. For the bridge to which the devils were leading them is broken, and there is no way to the next ditch except down the slope of the bank. Virgil takes hold of Dante and slides with him quickly to the bottom. On glancing up they see the devils looking down, infuriated by the escape of their intended victims.

It is an exciting episode, and an example of that ability of Dante's to imagine himself in a situation involving loss of dignity, serving as he does in this instance as a butt for particularly grotesque, robust humour, of the *taverna* type, of which he must undoubtedly have had experience.

Dante's humour is, however, not always so boisterous or coarse. grained. A lighter, more delicate shade is not far to seek. Dante dearly loves his guide and master, Virgil (Dimmi, maestro mio, dimmi, signor . . -) but he does, on one delightful occasion, allow himself to poke gentle fun at Virgil's elaborate mode of addressing people of importance, his "parola ornata", to which Beatrice refers in such complimentary terms when she descends to the Limbo to urge him to go to Dante's rescue. The episode in question occurs in the first canto of *Purgatorio*. Dante and Virgil have emerged from the centre of the earth to the mountain of Purgatory where they are challenged by a white-haired, white-bearded man, of most venerable aspect. Virgil recognizes him as the soul of an ancient Roman, one of his own contemporaries: Cato, the Younger, who committed suicide in Utica, after Pompey's defeat by Caesar at the Battle of Pharsalia, in the year 48 B.C. This august figure is the guardian of the lower slopes of the Mountain of Purgatory, and it is in his official capacity that he challenges the two newcomers who have reached the mountain by so irregular a route.

(1) *Inferno* xxii, 14-15.

Virgil here takes it upon himself to answer more fully than is necessary. It would be quite sufficient for him to give Cato the required assurance that their journey is sanctioned by divine grace, but on recognizing him he feels it necessary to make him a long, embellished speech.

Dante, who loves him, shows here, also, how well he knows and understands him. The speech lasts for 32 lines, of which the first three alone would suffice, for they contain all that Cato needs to know:

> . . . " 'Da me non venni;
> donna scese dal ciel, per li cui prieghi
> della mia compagnia costui sovvenni.' " (1)

("I came not of my own free will. A lady descended from Heaven, in response to whose entreaties I aided this man with my company.")

In the lines which follow, Virgil unfolds the story of Dante's misdeeds and narrow escape. Virgil's part in the rescue, his moral support to Dante during the journey, are made clear, although Virgil disclaims most of the credit for the success, so far, of the expedition. He attributes this to divine power, which, he implies, has enabled him to lead Dante to see and hear Cato. The complimentary tone of the speech increases, and is intended from here on, unmistakably, for the erstwhile Cato of Utica, rather than for the impersonal Guardian; discreet, yet admiring, reference is made to his heroic suicide; growing bolder, Virgil mentions Utica; he even makes wistful though ungrudging allusion to the eternal glory that will be Cato's after the Last Judgment. Not for Virgil such beatitude. Yet he wishes Cato to know that he is not one of the sinners of Hell. Minos, that "connoisseur of sin", has assigned no circle to him, he is a member of that community of virtuous and illustrious souls who, born before the Christian era, inhabit the "nobile castello", illumined in the midst of the darkness of Limbo. It is natural enough, we feel, for Virgil to want to clear himself in this respect in the eyes of this imposing elder, but in his mention of the Limbo he makes an unhappy blunder. Tentatively, he tries to establish a link between himself and Cato, reminding him that his wife Marcia is also in the Limbo.

The last of these lines, which is the conclusion of the speech, suggests that Virgil himself has some misgiving as to the appropriateness of his suggestion. It is, as Pietrobono has pointed out, as though he had seen a shadow of displeasure cross the face of Cato.

For a moment the old man is taken aback by this reference to so personal an aspect of his former life. He recalls the hold which Marcia had over him:

(1) *Purgatorio*, I, 52-54.

" 'Marzia piacque tanto alli occhi miei
mentre ch'i' fu' di là' diss'elli allora, (1)
'che quante grazie volse da me, fei.' "

("Marcia was so pleasing to my eyes, while I was in the other world," said he then, "that whatever favour she asked of me, I granted.")

Almost at once, however, he recovers his impersonal manner, and his response to Virgil's elaborate overtures is chilling. At the time of his withdrawal by Christ from the Limbo, when he was entrusted with the sacred function of guarding the lower slopes of Purgatory, all connections with his former existence were severed. Such an appeal in his wife's name is therefore gratuitous.

" 'Ma se donna del ciel ti move e regge
come tu di', *non c'è mestier lusinghe:* (2)
bastisi ben che per lei mi richegge.' "

("But if, as you say, a lady from Heaven sent you here and is guiding you, *there is no need for flattery.* Let it be quite sufficient for you to ask me in her name.")

"There is no need for flattery": thus Cato dismisses the "parola ornata" of that "anima cortese Mantovana di cui la fama ancor nel mondo dura, e durerà quanto 'l mondo lontana." (3)

(. . . that gracious Mantuan soul, whose fame still endures and will endure as far into the future as the world itself.")

During the whole of this speech, Dante has been down on his knees: Cato, not deigning to enquire the identity of one to whom such an irregular journey has been granted (nor even the identity of Virgil himself), refers to him indifferently as "costui", and bids Virgil take him down to the water's edge, and there cleanse his murky countenance, stained by the vapours of Hell.

Solemnly and thoughtfully, they do as they are told. But Cato has not finished with them yet.

Soon after this interview, a boat-load of spirits arrive from Ostia, among them is Casella, a singer and friend of Dante. Dante and Virgil, together with all the crowd of souls, stand round him listening entranced while he sings one of Dante's own *canzoni*. But the concert is abruptly brought to an end by Cato, who here departs from the Stoic calm which has so far characterised him, and actually shouts at the souls:

"Gridando: 'Che è cio, spiriti lenti?
qual negligenza, quale stare è questo?' " (4)

(Shouting: "What is this, indolent spirits? What negligence, what dallying is this?")

(1) Ibid, 85-87. (2) Ibid, 91-93. (3) *Inferno,* II, 58-60. (4) *Purgatorio,* II, 120-121.

The "spiriti lenti" do not stop to explain, but scamper away up the hillside, "nor", says Dante, ending the Canto with a telling understatement, "was our departure any less swift"!

In this episode, Dante the character is almost completely merged with Dante the writer; both, we feel, are a little embarrassed by the unfortunate turn of events. But Dante must surely have written that speech with his tongue in his cheek. He had himself quite a reputation for eloquence in his own career, he was attune to all the subtle interplay of feeling to which such a situation would give rise. His delicacy in conveying the embarrassment of the episode is seen in that he associates himself in it completely. Yet that demure, kneeling figure has his ears pricked, we feel sure, even if his gaze is lowered.

There is, throughout the *Purgatorio*, a light-heartedness, almost a happiness, that quite distinguishes it from the *Inferno*. The difference is, of course, that the souls, though in torment, look towards the future with confidence. Dante himself, though he breaks out more than once into a bitter and passionate denunciation of the political corruption of his time, seems less burdened in soul. His first glimpse of the sky on emerging from Hell is described, in the very first canto, in words which convey an exultation of the spirit. This exultation, though held in check by the solemnity of Cato, by the contemplation of suffering, by the awareness of Virgil's inevitable departure, remains with Dante during his climb up the mountain.

One or two of the souls he encounters seem characterised by what might almost be called a gaiety, explained no doubt by their joyful anticipation of beatitude. Manfred, on showing Dante the wound in his breast by which he died, *smiles* as he reveals his identity:

> ". . . mostrommi una piaga a sommo 'l petto.
> Poi *sorridendo* disse: 'Io son Manfredi, . . .' " (1)

It is on the cornice immediately above Manfred's that Dante meets his lazy friend Belacqua. If no other instances were to be found, this enchanting episode would alone be sufficient evidence of Dante's humour. Dante and Virgil, after a strenuous climb, have sat down on a ledge of rock to rest, and are discussing astronomy. Dante observes, as they sit facing the East, that the sun is on their left, instead of on their right, as he would have expected, being familiar with its aspect from the Northern hemisphere. He pays diligent attention to a long and involved explanation by Virgil of this phenomenon and, on its conclusion, disconcerts the (usually bewildered) reader by replying briskly:

> " 'Certo, maestro mio', . . . 'unquanco
> non vid'io chairo sì com'io discerno
> là dove mio ingegno parea manco.' " (2)

(1) *Purgatorio*, III, 111-112. (2) *Purgatorio*, IV, 76-78.

("Indeed, my Master, . . . I never saw as clearly as I now discern a matter which seemed beyond my understanding.")

There follows then a discussion of the difficulties of the ascent they have before them, and while they are gravely pondering the matter, a voice interrupts them with these irreverent words:

. . . " 'Forse
che di sedere in pria avrai distretta!' " (1)

("Perhaps you will need to sit down before you reach the top.")

The voice comes from behind a rock against which a group of souls are resting. Among them is Belacqua whom Dante recognises, but who is so lazy and indifferent that it is too much trouble for him to raise his head to look Dante in the face. He sits there hugging his knees and mocks Dante for his eagerness to reach the top of the mountain and his zeal for astronomy:

". . . 'Or va tu su, che se' valente!' " (2)

("Go on up yourself if you're so strong.")

he says when Dante comments on his lazy attitude, and he continues:—

. . ." 'Hai ben veduto come il sole
dall'omero sinistro il carro mena?' " (3)

("Have you quite understood how the sun drives his chariot on the left?")

The thrust is delightful, and even more so is the glimpse we then obtain of Dante relaxing into a smile at such unexpected impudence:

"Li atti suoi pigri e le corte parole
mosson le labbra mie *un poco a riso*." (4)

(His lazy attitude and his brusque words moved my lips to smile a little.)

By the fourth canto of *Purgatorio,* then, the "tight lips" of which Mr. Newman has complained, have relaxed into a smile.

As he ascends the mountain, he gradually throws off all heaviness of spirit until, in Canto XXI, he is able to savour the pleasure of an amusing situation which arises between Virgil, Statius and himself. Statius, the Roman poet of the time of Nero, joins company with them on his release from purgation. He tells them who he was and of the debt he owes, as a poet, to a certain work known as the Aeneid; so great is his admiration of the author that if only he could have known him, he would gladly have spent another year on Purgatory. This amusing situation, treated so naturally by Dante, is one in which the reader feels, to his surprise and pleasure, that he has been admitted, for a moment, to the intimacy of informal conversation with the author. Virgil looks quickly at Dante, and bids him, not in words, but by his look, be silent:

(1) Ibid, 98-99. (2) Ibid 114. (3) Ibid, 119-120. (4) *Purgatorio,* IV, 121-122.

"con viso che, tacendo, disse 'Taci'," (1)

But Dante, though he keeps silent, cannot prevent a gleam of amusement from crossing his face. Statius looks at him in surprise, and asks:

. . ." 'perchè la tua faccia testeso
un lampeggiar di riso dimostrommi?' " (2)
("Why did a gleam of laughter flash across your face just now?")

Dante, caught between the two, looks from one to the other, longing to tell Statius the truth. Virgil at last graciously consents and Dante reveals that Virgil himself is there beside them.

This episode, designed though it is to redound glory upon Virgil, shows us at the same time a living Dante quite unlike the Dante whom Boccaccio describes as "nella faccia sempre maliconico e pensoso". From the words in which he here justifies his inability to conceal his amusement, it is evident that he at any rate considered himself as well qualified to speak of laughter as of sorrow:

. . . "non può tutto la virtù che vole;
chè riso e pianto son tanto seguaci
alla passion di che ciascun si spicca,
che men seguon voler ne' più veraci." (3)

(Will-power cannot do all that it desires; for laughter and tears follow so swiftly upon the emotions from which they spring, that the more sincere the man, the less he is able to control them.)

On his own evidence, then, Dante found it as difficult to restrain his laughter as his tears; and how easily he was moved to tears we know from innumerable incidents both in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*. The figure of a weeping Dante is familiar to our imagination; what of the laughing Dante? The fuller merriment which he experiences during the scene with Statius is revealed in his eyes:

"Io pur sorrisi come l'uom ch'ammicca;
per che l'ombra si tacque, e riguardommi
nelli occhi ove 'l sembiante più si ficca; . . ." (4)

(Thus I smiled like a man whose eyes twinkle; so that the spirit was silent and looked me full in the eyes where the expression is best beheld.)

A smile conveyed with the eyes pleased him most, it seems, especially in women. "What is laughter", he asks in *Il Convivio*, "but a coruscation of the soul's delight?" A cackling laugh, ("schiamazzare come gallina") is distasteful, but how wonderful the reflexion of the soul's delight in the eyes of Beatrice!

"Ahi mirabile riso de la mia donna . . . che mai non
si sentia se non de l'occhio!" (5)

(1) *Purgatorio*, xxi, 104. (2) Ibid, 113-114. (3) *Purgatorio* xxi, 105-107. (4) Ibid, 109-111. (5) *Convivio*.)

"Quel ch'ella par quand'un poco sorride,
Non si puo dicer, nè tener a mente,
Sì è nuovo miracolo gentile." (1)

Francesca recalls the love-story which she and Paolo read together, and what remains most vividly in her memory is the laughing mouth of Guinevere as she is kissed by Lancelot:

" 'Quando leggemmo *il disiato riso*
esser baciato da cotanto amante, . . .' " (2)

The "pargoletta", who so charms the elderly Dante, with her fair hair and all the poetry of her youth, turns from her flower-gathering to smile at him:

"A me, *sorridendo*,
Tutta si volse, . . ." (3)

It is at the top of the Mountain of Purgatory that we find the perfect idyll of feminine gaiety amidst paradisaical surroundings. There, in the Garden of Eden, Dante sees:

"Una donna soletta che si gìa
cantando e scegliendo fior da fiore
ond'era pinta tutta la sua via. . . .
. . . Ella ridea dall'altra riva dritta,
trattando più color con le sue mani,
che l'alta terra sanza seme gitta." (4)

(a woman quite alone, who went her way singing and plucking flower upon flower, with which all her path was gay . . . She was laughing as she stood there on the opposite bank, filling her hands with many colours which that elevated land produces without seed.)

All three poets, Dante, Virgil and Statius, are evidently surprised to come upon such happiness; for the girl, catching sight of their faces, stops laughing and explains:

" 'Voi siete nuovi, e forse perch'io rido'
cominciò ella 'in questo luogo eletto
all'umana natura per suo nido,
maravigliando tienvi alcun sospetto;
ma luce rende il salmo *Delectasti*,
che puote disnebbiar vostro intelletto.' " (5)

("You are new here," she began, "and perhaps you are surprised and disapproving to find that I am laughing in this place which was chosen as the cradle of the human family. But the psalm *Delectasti* affords a light that may clear your minds of all misgiving.")

Thus she justifies her happiness, and Dante proceeds to question her concerning the natural laws of the garden. The girl gaily relates to them the marvels of the place, and finally observes ingenuously that the

(1) *Vita Nuova* (2) *Inferno*, v, 133-134. (3) *Canzoniere*, Ballata beginning "Era tutta soletta . . ." (4) *Purgatorio* xxviii, 40-42; 66-68. (5) Ibid, 76-81.

ancient poets used to dream of a golden age; perhaps, she says, they were thinking of this garden all the time. The two "ancient poets," Virgil and Statius, who are walking behind, are evidently much amused by this remark, for Dante, on looking round to see how they have taken it, finds them laughing:

"Io mi rivolsi 'n dietro allora tutto
a' miei poeti, e vidi che con riso
udito avean l'ultimo costrutto;" (1)

(I turned right round then to my poets and saw that they had heard these last words with laughter.)

This is, as it turns out, almost our last glimpse of Virgil; not long afterwards, when Dante turns to him for support, he finds him gone. Unnoticed, he has slipped away to return to the Limbo, to re-join the "bella scula," whose aspect is "nè trista nè lieta," whose eyes are "tardi e gravi," and in whose company he will laugh no more.

(1) Ibid, 145-147.

The quotation from H. A. L. Fisher comes from "A History of Europe" Ch. xxv. Mr. Ernest Newman's comment occurs in "Opera Nights," Putnam, 1943, p. 39 *et seq.* The lines in which Dante replies to both occur in the conversation with Statius in Purgatory xxi, 121-122: the original are:

" 'Forse che tu ti maravigli,
antico spirto, del rider ch'io fei;' "

PROBLEMS OF THE CONTEMPORARY POET

BY

PETER RUSSELL

I am asked to write about the problems of the contemporary poet and will deal with them under three headings:

1. The poet's problems as a member of society.
2. The poet's problems as an individual.
3. Technical problems.

devoting one article to each division of the subject. I need hardly add that these divisions are little more than makeshifts or convenient aids to understanding. Having made our anatomy we must hasten to put the pieces together again and to be aware not only of the facets of the poet's problems, but the poet's problem as an integral experience. The poet is by his very nature an individual, and however useful it may be to divide him into his social part and his non-social part, his religious part and his non-religious part, his imaginative part and his mechanical part, and so forth he necessarily remains individual in the strictest sense.

The whole subject is one that has been discussed ever since the peculiar position of the individual artist in society began to be realised, and the fact that no really satisfactory thesis has yet been put forward, in spite of the many more or less dogmatic answers ranging from Plato to Marx, need hardly deter us. Wordsworth held that the poet's task among others was to increase the range of sensibility of his fellow men, and Arnold that poetry was the highest form of criticism. It may be held with impunity than that the critical writer's task is likewise to increase the reader's sensibility and awareness. "The critic is either a parasite or he is concerned with the growth of the next Paideuma" states Ezra Pound and I would look for no better justification. Dogma may be useful, but no more so than un-dogma, it is the integration of the two in total experience with which we must concern ourselves if we are to apprehend the whole problem faced by poets today. We may not produce a complete answer but we may make ourselves more and more critically aware.

The unlikeliness of finding a correct and satisfactory formula appears to be due in part to two main factors: First, the ever-changing nature of the conditions the poet has to live in, and second, less often emphasized but more relevant here, the diversity of function and intention of the poet himself. The first of these two factors is more important to an examination

of the general problems of the poet in society, here I am concerned with the particular problems of the poet in our society in England today, and I must hasten to remind my readers of the vastly different problems faced today by a poet in say rural Bengal, renascent Indonesia, either half of China, or New Zealand. It is enough to say that every human society appears to have its artists, whether chosen by chance factors as among the Mundugumor of New Guinea where the males born with the umbilical cord twisted around the throat is destined to be an artist, or as with us, where the individual desire and actual talent are the chief determining factors.

Having discovered that he has an incurable urge to express and record his feelings in poetry, the rudimentary poet naturally wonders why he should write, how he should write, what he should write. Should he become a professional poet or writer; should he concern himself with politics, religion, or philosophy; should he live alone or participate in the normal activities of the masses of his fellow beings? Such questions immediately put me in mind of the twelve questions asked in the winter number of "Poetry Quarterly." I reproduce the first three questions.

1. What way of life do you think most conducive to the writing of poetry: the ascetic or the sensual?

2. Do you consider the married or the unmarried state most advantageous to composition?

3. Which do you think most favourable: the solitary or the gregarious existence?

It will at once be clear that except in finding out the experience of individual poets, or telling what percentage of poets hold one or another opinion, these questions are not generally valid at all. They serve the purpose they were designed for, but they would not serve our purpose here. If one attempts to answer such poems on behalf of "the contemporary poet," one's answer could only be "Both" or "Yes and no" or "One man's meat is another man's poison" and realize more fully the significance of this diversity of nature and function in the poet of which I have already spoken. It seems equally legitimate for a poet to live as a recluse as to take part in the usual pleasures of the majority of people, as permissible to be married as not be to married, as understandable to be a civil servant as to live the now almost mythical "Bohemian" life (if that be possible in these days of threatened Labour Direction). If poetry is good, it must surely be equally acceptable under whatever circumstances it may have been generated, and it is not difficult to find examples of good poets who were civil servants, Bohemians, University Professors or just plain "mad!"

This leads us to the questions "What if anything does the poet owe to society?" or "Has the poet any contract with society?" and the antithetical question "What if anything does society owe the poet?" It is not

fashionable today to hold that the only criterion is the production of the best possible poetry. Such an opinion is, no more untenable than any other dogmatic opinion on the subject. The opinions and methods of Henry Miller may be disapproved of, but they cannot be neglected. Such a set of opinions might lead one to approve equally of the comparatively retired life of T. S. Eliot and of the turbulent participation by François Villon in the unrefined experiences of life with all its qualities of sin or antisocial action. On the other hand at the other extreme the highly-conditioned opinion of Puritan, Marxist or Roman Catholic circles can no more "contain" the conditions in which all types of good poetry can be written, than they can be neglected. Intermediate shades of liberal opinion have neither more nor less to offer in general than either of the extremes. Only the individual can find his natural level, and from that level make his compromise with multiform society. And just as poetry may spring in one form or another from the compromise of a poet with society, so it may also spring from the failure of a poet to achieve that compromise. This is to say of course that poetry as we all know springs from experience and if the poet is to use his full potentiality he must experience the world he lives in in all its aspects to the utmost of his power. All knowledge, all experience likely to be made poetry by him must be his province, and he alone can be the judge of this, (and that not necessarily consciously). Knowledge, and particularly self-knowledge, experienced and digested, seems to be the raw material of poetry, and each poet needs his own individually oriented way of life to be able fully to realise this experience.

Now if the poet does owe anything to society, he must surely owe first and foremost his poetry. To write it he must have a maximum of freedom to gain the necessary knowledge, and to experience it thoroughly, for the full intensity of his Geist Daimon or Genius to be allowed to appear. It is plain then that if society is to recognise the value of poetry it owes a lot from the start to the potential poet. But first what else does the poet owe society? Does he owe anything but his poetry? Does he owe our society, which is supposedly democratic, his own participation in its government, as a return for the protection and facilities he receives? Once again the answer is both "No answer" and "the whole answer." Some of us believe in the democratic nature of our society and that the protection we receive and the facilities we share are valuable. It would seem natural then if we have appreciated such protection and facilities, to feel our own side of the bargain, and not only to fulfil society's demands and requests—observance of the law, voting at elections and so on—but also to express that feeling—the poetic experience of cooperative action or living. If the result is sometimes difficult to distinguish from party propaganda there is still no reason to dispute its validity *if* it is good poetry. I shall not attempt to say here what I mean by good poetry—we all think we know

what we understand by it—and our own opinions will suffice. I would cite as examples some of the communist poetry of Hugh McDiarmid, C. Day Lewis, W. H. Auden or Stephen Spender. Thus some poets can make poetry out of their willing compromise with a creed or system. Now some poets while largely approving the protection and facilities given to us by society, find the cost too high and find themselves in a dilemma. The conflict or dilemma itself is equally or even more productive of poetry—it too is experience. Thirdly some people having experienced the advantageous and disadvantageous natures of social living, realise that for them these things have no value. They do not want protection. They are equally happy to walk across country as to take a train or bus. If only they were allowed they would as soon sow and reap by hand and live on their own independent effort. This attitude and the various compromises with conditions that such people have to face, likewise can be productive of poetry. There is no reason to believe that anyone of these attitudes is less worthy than the others, and however much we disagree or fail to sympathise with them, one has to allow that the individual, not being infinitely malleable, must find his own level and take up his own standpoint somewhere. He may move from time to time as he absorbs more and more experience, as for instance W. H. Auden has done, having at each stage absorbed, digested and realised a larger body of experience.

It would seem that the poet must gain as much knowledge of the conditions he experiences, and relate them as accurately to himself as he can. It is only depending on this result (and it is bound to be an ever-changing result) that he can decide for himself what he is willing to owe to the society he has to live in, what he is prepared unwillingly to pay if he has to, and what he will under no circumstances pay. Many of us were happy and willing to fight against Fascism in the war, many fought because while they had little interest in the rights and wrongs of the case they felt they had no alternative, and a few people of courage and conviction refused at any cost to fight. Good poets are to be found in each of these categories just as good people are to be found in them.

By now I shall have upset everyone and pleased none—we are each of us limited by our temperament. Some of us are incapable of granting any view save that of our own narrow "party line." However strongly one may feel—and I have my own personal narrow loyalties myself—we must consider each problem strictly as a problem *from a certain standpoint.* We have to walk round a sculpture and see it from every angle before we can have an opinion of it, and even then we cannot see it from all angles at once—we can only form a general opinion of it as far as our own limited capabilities permit.

I hold then that the poet must decide, and that nobody else can, how much he owes society. He may be equally right or sincere whether

he writes specifically for society or for his own satisfaction, whether his work is consciously made easier in order to be made acceptable to the majority of people, or whether he writes "difficult" poetry which is acceptable only to a few. If such work is good it is equally acceptable. The poet's one duty, both to himself and to society, is to develop or exploit his experience, his own daydreams and myths, to their fullest potentiality.

The granting of such wide initiative to the poet may seem dangerous —and lest it be thought that I am suggesting that anything or everything is acceptable, I will say here that this freedom of loyalty in the poet must demand no less discipline, deep thought and study than any other outlook. In fact such removal of obstacles will facilitate rather than cramp the poet's thought and technique.

The whole question then of what the poet owes to society and what society owes him in return becomes a fluid one. No one is to know a poet until he writes poetry, so that no society can expect to give its poets recognition until they are more or less adult. In our society today the man destined to be a poet receives no more or less than anyone else the benefits of education and general upbringing. If he is recognised as an exceptional child he may receive special attention of course whether it be by scholarship to better schools or if necessary in psychotic cases or delicate children by medical attention which is of course owed equally to all members of our society. *Qua* potential poet however it seems hardly practical or fair to expect any sort of special treatment. On the other hand when a poet has something good to show for himself, regardless of whether it is potential propaganda for against the particular society concerned, it is only reasonable to suppose that bursaries or pensions should be granted in the absence of other financial resources to enable the poet to devote his whole time and energy to, writing. One remembers that the arch-anarchist William Godwin, living in a society which many of us would claim (whether rightly or wrongly) as much less civilised than our own was granted a pension by the government of his day. Whatever might be revealed by detailed investigation into the strange case of William Godwin, some such recognition of the value of the artist (or philosopher) seems more than desirable—but of course this is one of society's problems, not the poet's immediate problem.

Honour, fame, hero-worship, even deification, as well as ridicule and martyrdom have been the lot of the world's poets. Each age seems to have its own peculiar method of expression. It is a general belief that the prevailing method of expression of our own society is that of indifference. This may be true—we do not crown our poet's with myrtle or laurel—we wait until the latest possible moment and then offer them the O.M. It may be however that the poets are in part to blame here, or rather that the poet of today has ceased to be interested in popular acclaim, and

that in the absence of a Weltanschauung or religion shared by all, with its attendant ceremonies and festivities, we cannot expect the serious artist to receive acclaim from more than a small section of the people at one time. The situation may be slightly different in the Soviet Union where there is a greater unity of vision and imagination, but these are early days to expect a resplendent social or ritual art to have matured, in the sense say of the ritual Greek drama which must have taken many centuries to evolve, and even then had only a brief flowering. We must confine ourselves to our own apparently silver-age England, reminding ourselves however, if that be necessary, that we live in an age of great poetic activity, and as W. B. Yeats pointed out, a period almost unparalleled for its number of good minor poets (and this is as true today, probably more so, than when W. B. Yeats wrote it).

So our poet has little need for despair. Though he lives in a society not over friendly to his aims and aspirations and in a world of rapid change and disintegration, he is his own staff and his own comfort, and in many ways has more opportunity today for poetic realisation than he has had for a long time. The details of the recent revolutionary reinvigoration of our language, the remarkable reappearance of an English poetic drama, of a vital body of modern poetry much superior to its immediate forbears (I mean that English poetry from Hopkins, Yeats, Pound and Eliot to our own day is in every way greater in its achievement than the poetry of a number of generations preceding), and above all the fact that we are living in a time when we can witness the conflict not only of capitalism and socialism, but also of philosophic materialism and idealism, every day becoming more critical.

In the light of this the poet may reflect on how he should spend his days. It must surely be plain that the serious poet should under the best conditions be able to devote his whole time and energy to his craft and it is equally plain that this is rarely possible today. The immediate financial problem is naturally one of the bugbears of the poet's life. The possibility of making a living for oneself out of poetry is remote even for the established poet, and much more remote for a poet with a wife and children. The days when a poet could receive as much as £8,000 for a single poem, as Crabbe once did, are over now! The poet must have social security—now he has lost even the chances of it that existed in the old days of patronage, few and far between as these chances must have been—and he ought to be reasonably free to come and go at anyrate in peacetime from one country and another. Certainly State Socialism appears to have something to offer the cultural worker though that something may not always be quite what the poet may want. Reports from the Soviet Union are so conflicting still and the cultural standard in that country so apparently unformed as yet, that it is almost impossible to judge what the position of the state-pensioned artist is. However the

principle is there and seems to be a good one. The answer to the financial problem plainly lies in the more civilised outlook of society and a greater recognition for the poet, but also, and more important, in the poet's production of a more functional form of art as far as that is possible today. The first signs of a poetic drama in England becoming widely acceptable today are now plain, though the financial position of the theatres concerned, and of actor and poet, are extremely poor. It seems that bilateral effort is necessary. Society should after all give more attention to the poet and less concession to the nauseating forms of entertainment popular at present, while the poet must earn the betterment of his status by creating a poetic tradition which is functional and socially significant. This of course applies to the poets who want such recognition and such traditions. The personal, lyrical or philosophic poet may not be so much concerned with writing of wide appeal, though of course all poetic achievement is inextricably bound up together in any time.

Having solved his own personal and artistic problems well enough to write coherently, the poet must find his way out of the financial maze. So far the Government in spite of the large powers it has acquired with regard to direction of labour, shows no signs of using it unjustifiably against the interests of artists in general but the danger certainly is there. Poets like everyone else have little or no choice in accepting or not accepting many of society's demands. If on the other hand in peacetime they are to find themselves directed into uncongenial work then the matter is very serious indeed, Both poet and bureaucracy must realise their relationship and avoid such a clash as far as that is possible. No one thing can ever be more significant of disintegration or weakness in a state than the widespread curtailment of the activities of its artists.

I have not mentioned the amateur poet in this article, important as he is. His problems are smaller and follow in the wake of the major problems of the consciously dedicated poet. His one important function apart from writing his own poetry is as the champion of poetry and poet The amateur poet and the enthusiastic reader of poetry have their own secondary parts to play as the confirmers of the paideuma of the age, and as such are as important as the proposers of it—the poets and critics.

Poetry is very much alive and the agelong struggle of the poet is healthily vigorous. Realising their potentialities, exploiting their experience, fighting against all that seems unjust and unworthy, and indicating their own individual visions of the way towards a better life and a greater fulfilment of our human potentiality, poets deserve ever more attention from the world, and themselves must reach for ever greater understanding of both the familiar and the mysterious elements of our life.

SPEECH AND POETRY

BY

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"No language has lived until it has been spoken—the breath is the Life — and our appreciation of written language can only be in accordance with our memory—conscious or unconscious—of its rhythm and speech sounds." Those are the words, as nearly as I can recall them, of the Poet Laureate, Mr. John Masefield, who has always taken a lively interest in the speaking of Poetry.

Every writer hears the spoken sound as he composes and every reader imagines it. It is therefore certain that unless standards of speech were maintained poetry and its appreciation would suffer. Byron realised, as do many of our moderns, that the development of the Speech Centre of the brain results in an expressive, virile choice of word and the perfect blend of mood and meaning, of rhythm and idiom. Speech is a vital test of what is good in Poetry and what is bad, and is as necessary to it as the presentation of plays to Drama. "Thank you, Miss Rorke, you have made my words live" was the tribute paid by Miss Clemence Dane to Miss Mary Rorke, after her performance of Mrs. Hathaway in the blank-verse play "Will Shakespeare" and this tribute is eloquent of the power of speech. Poetry is the expression of the Mind of Man and the Spirit of Man in an emotional harmony whose rhythm transcends that of logical reasoning or conventional conversation. Rhythm is one of the pre-occupations of the speaker of verse, for sound alone, not print, can reveal its full beauty. Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie, another enthusiast of spoken poetry—described rhythm as "the emotion of thinking." This definition explains the difference between the rhythms of the past and those of the present. The fact that rhythm is less tuneful now than formerly is not a case of the poet choosing to discard something beautiful for something less beautiful but the fact that sincere art must be creative and represent its own age and not become a mere copy of the past. This age is chaotic because it marks a cusp period and the rhythms of today must suggest this state of mental and physical upheaval except where the theme has a serenity that transcends time.

There are two fundamental essentials for the Speaker of Poetry. The first is sincerity, that is to say freedom from that self-display which Stanislavsky so tellingly describes as "flirting with the audience." Inspiration is drawn from the sub-conscious which conscious effort kills and the speaker's interpretation can be true and creative only if he is in possession of a technique that sets him free from anxiety about himself. The second

is a poetic understanding of the various forms of verse, of verse-patterns and of rhythm. He must be able to appreciate the metrical pattern of the underlying scansion while speaking with the broader sweep of the natural speech-rhythm or sense-stress of the phrase, for the opposition of the two patterns is at once the virility and delight of verse. This was first shown by Milton. The speaker must also sense the special-pattern provided by the vowel-music which reinforces the speech-rhythm, and he must allow rhymes and reiterated words to fall subtly on the ear. He must in short be at one with the poet in mood and meaning.

Our great tradition of Epic and of Narrative poetry, ballads, etc., is an achievement of the spoken word except for a few modern examples. In common with Mr. Masefield many of us feel that a revival of the story-poem would develop that sense of communication and spirit of excitement and suspense so valuable to writer and speaker alike. It would also revive our native art of telling good stories and telling them well.

Satiric Verse relies upon great accuracy of beat and a formal pattern. Humour depends largely upon the unexpectedness and incongruity of the rhyming words and in the speaking of this kind of verse all these characteristics must be pointed.

Lyric Poetry is the expression of feeling and its intensity is expressed more through its music than its intellectual implication. It is primarily song. The speaker must capture the mood manifest in the rhythm. He must as it were, be thinking aloud, so that his audience seems to be enjoying the privilege of listening to the communings of the Poet. The thought is concentrated and there can be but little change of pitch and all conversational or didactic inflections must be avoided.

The Sonnet is described by the poet, Wallace Nichols, as distinct from lyric proper and best described as "Drama of the Mind"—an emotion of thought caught at the peak of its intensity and concentrated into a strict form analogous to the Fugue in music. While insistent that it should not be dramatised he considers it should be spoken with "the same interpretative understanding of an inner drama as a great pianist shows when playing one of the later sonatas of Beethoven." Sonnets have a tidal effect and must surge forward to the last line.

Dramatic Poetry is the story in action and in its Play-form depends largely upon conflict of character. In this work the speaker enters into the psychology of the character he represents, and he does not address the audience directly. Gesture plays an important part.

In a recorded speech Mr. John Drinkwater speaking of Shakespearean characters said, in effect, that there was only one correct presentation of each, namely the one Shakespeare had in mind. He deprecated the enthusiasm of audiences to hear the different interpretations of different actors in parts such as Hamlet, since there could be but one correct

conception of the part. While this precept is indubitably valuable to all interpretative artists, I venture to suggest that true art which is timeless is not for an individual but for humanity and the twentieth century may find in Shakespeare's message a shade of meaning not perceived in his day. Is not the power of Shakespeare's word greater than Shakespeare himself and must not his inspiration surpass his conscious conception? I venture to think that a modern orchestration of the works of Beethoven would exalt and not offend him could he now hear them, and that he would be exhilarated by the realization that his message transcended his perception. This strengthens the conviction that it is not even desirable that there should be but one correct method of interpreting a poem. Provided that the speaker sincerely captures the poet's mood and observes the form and music of the poem his individual perception must be free to speak each facet of Truth in the Light in which he is able to see it.

It has been and will be increasingly the policy of the Poetry Society to combine the two creative arts of Verse Writing and Verse Speaking as shown by the Premium Competitions for writers, the Verse-Speaking adjudications and the Friday evening Readings. The Adjudication and Executive Councils are determined that the Gold Medal for Verse Speaking shall be an award indicative of the highest achievement in interpretative and creative art. Mr. Galloway Kyle by his inception of the Verse-Speaking Examination, established with indefatigable enthusiasm a great tradition which it is the earnest desire of the Council and the Board of Examiners to pursue and expand. This work will be founded on all that is best in the past, receptive to all that is best in the present and reaching towards all that may be possible in the future.

THE LINEAGE OF ENGLISH POETRY

BY

DEREK STANFORD

Undoubtedly tradition is an unwise word to use when speaking of the course of English verse, and in normal circumstances the safest way out is simply to avoid it in this context. We have, in any case, so little of that quality in our literature which the term conventionally fits that our loss of such an epithet is hardly important. Unfortunately, of late, however, a certain limited number of poets have been reintroducing the word with new and arbitrary connotation. Briefly, their assertion is that the main tradition in our language has best been attested in recent years by the writings of James Joyce, and that their own work (the work that is of George Barker, Dylan Thomas, and Sydney Graham) forms a part of this central tradition. Barker himself goes so far as to exclude the verse of Keats from his eclectic pantheon, which includes amongst its selected gods an unnamed thirteenth century poet, Marlowe, Swinburne, and Dunstan Thompson—a somewhat unusual choice, to say the least. In the light of this novel challenge it may be of interest to reconsider the nature of development in English poetry, and see just how far we can talk about tradition.

To begin with, the literature of this country, compared with that of Italy and France, has few king-makers amongst its annals; or rather, perhaps, its sovereign figures have chosen to ignore these bestowers of the crown. We know, for example, that Jonson disapproved of the unacademic mind of Shakespeare, saying that his genius "needed braking"; and that "gentle Shakespeare", in his turn, was quite uninfluenced and unruffled by his censor. We notice, next, that those few poets who founded schools amongst their contemporaries were not themselves the greatest figures, but rather poets of a secondary order. Thus we discover "the tribe of Ben" and the monopolist school of Pope, but find that Shakespeare, Milton and Keats founded no poets' academies. We also observe that where a poet, after his own life-time, is closely imitated —as Milton was in the mid-eighteenth century by Warton, Young, and Akenside—the work resulting is never of the best. So it was not until Keats, in the early phase of his development, had controlled the influence of Spencer's style upon him, and formed his own idiom from a compost of Spenser, Shakespeare, Chatterton (plus the unknown personal quality) that his verse achieved its full individual voice. Again, it was the too unrestrained predominance of one poet's style (Milton's, this time) upon

an original composition which led to the failure of Keat's first "Hyperion".

In so far, then, as tradition implies a continuous acceptance of recognised authority we see that the course of English poetry is hardly to be termed a traditional affair. Instead, its history is the story of propagation by the personal element—the recognition of personal affinities, and not the observance of a common decree. In other words, the English poet (save during the Augustan age) has felt himself free to apprentice his talent wherever his temperament's deepest feelings led him; and even such unfortunates as Collins, Chatterton, and Gray—"born out of their due time and place"—were able to accomplish very much more against the grain of eighteenth century culture than had they lived and written abroad.

To a certain extent, in this direction, the English poet has overcome the disadvantage of being born in a period unfavourable to him, and by finding his parents—poetically speaking—in whatever century gave them birth, he has avoided the imposition of having to assume the set style of his age. In one sense, therefore, the course of English poetry is not to be described or understood as a regular chronological progression. Its movement is not a clear upward movement, with each poet starting where the last left off. With regard to style and idiom, its course suggests a game of snakes-and-ladders where the movement occurs in no single direction though the players' intention is to climb to the top.

But if the development of English poetry appears as a sporadic affair, there would seem to be certain psychological constants discoverable in the course of English verse which permit us to speak of its characteristic lineage. These aspects we must now briefly consider.

Examine a few lines from Chaucer or Shakespeare, from Dryden, Chatterton ("Rowley"), Keats or Hardy. In all these samples there are factors in common resulting from a similarly expressive frame of mind (perhaps a partly racial matter). This common creative attitude may be described as being both empirical and individualistic; a state of mind and its appropriate expression removed as far as possible from any *a priori* approach. Thus, for example, though Chaucer and Dante were both mediaeval Catholic poets the outlook of the first, in comparison, is one of humanistic curiosity regarding the various types of men and women, while the concern of the second is that of the legislator, moralist, and judge. And, again, though Shelley was a Platonist, there is little of the exclusive attitude in his verse which the author of *The Republic* assumed. Poetry, for him, was an "open society", a free commune of the imagination.

Along with this pragmatic and individual approach to life, which seems to have distinguished the greatest minds in English poetry, there goes a concomitant manner of expression, which, in its turn, we may designate as one of heightened naturalism. Thus when Chaucer writes

"O martyr souded in virginitee"*

his eloquence has not cut adrift from the actual, as it so often does in such poets as d'Annunzio, Marini, and Gongora. The mean-average of tone and pitch in the greatest English verse seems to arise from success in combining the idea of poetry as "impassioned speech" with that of it which Wordsworth described as the language of "a man speaking to men". Consider, for example, how little there is of the wire-pulled rhetoric of pathos in Hamlet's last request to Horatio:

> "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story."

This bias against virtuosity, against a demonstrative bravura or panache, has resulted in an art which seldom stresses or advertises its medium. Hence it comes about that in English verse the formal preoccupation of the poet has rarely taken precedence over the spirit and substance of his content. This is not intended to suggest that the shape which the unwritten poem must assume is of little concern to the English poet; for the shape, after all, is the body of the poem, the means by which it gains an objective existence. None the less, there too often remains a difference between the shape of the poem *as conceived* and the shape of the poem *as later constructed.* In the greatest English poetry these two forms have coincided, resulting in a technique which we may term *organic* rather then *mechanistic.* To put this in another fashion, we can say that the leading English poets have generally allowed the craftsman within them to be controlled by the *voyant* or seer. If, however, our best art is vision, the condition of its being so resides in the fact that vision is an art, and must not therefore be confused with the loose morphology of reverie and dreams.

In the light of these few reflections, let us now return to consider the claims put forward by certain Celtic poets, namely, that their work is in the main English tradition. Here, for example, are the first nine lines of Barker's "Austrian Requiem":

> "Who are the kings with diamonds in their eyes
> Mopping and mowing among our private shadows?
> Not to the syringa or the rose can we turn
> But meet their misery flowering its sorrows.
> Also evening is their grief, and morning is
> The term of their mourning time; spring and summer
> Elaborate the acanthus of their anger, and
> Formidable against the wall their tall bliss
> Kisses goodbye the kingdom that grows dimmer."

*The French soudé: soldered, fixed fast.

and here six lines from a later part of the poem:

> "Now with the lamentation of an illustrious nation
> Join the celebration of its ultimate liberation.
> The Austrian strong man pinioned among the pillars
> Pulls down around him the column of subjugation.
> The crocus breaks the rock, the eagle from its errors
> Arises and inscribes liberty on the skies."

Notice, in the first, the pun on "morning", the internal assonance of "term" and "time", the rodomontade of the last four lines; and, in the second, the heavy employment of polysyllabic latin diction. Magniloquent by all means, if you will; but without that touch of the actual in its eloquence, that higher realism of speech, which characterises the English masters.

Now Celtic art, Herbert Read once suggested, has principally been distinguished in the past by its linear design and its fondness for abstraction; and in the rhetoric of Burke (which Matthew Arnold thought too Asiatic) we find, perhaps, the literary expression of this same basic racial trait. This is not to deprecate the poetry of Barker, Graham, and Thomas regarded in the light of its own unique merits, but merely to maintain that the claim of these poets to be writing in the main-stream of the English tradition is an argument we cannot accept.* Tradition, as has been said before, is a misleading term employed here; but if the lineage (a word to be preferred) of English poetry has any real existence, then it is surely to be traced through Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, and Keats, rather than through an unnamed thirteenth century poet, Marlowe, Swinburne, Hopkins, and James Joyce.

Apart from the Irishism of regarding Joyce as the apex of England's main *poetical* tradition, the claim of these poets is somewhat analogous to stating the *Love's labour lost,* and *The two gentlemen of Verona,* occupy a central position in the body of Shakespeare's plays. Again, with all deference to Mr. Eliot, we may say that their assertion is on a par with that which considers the "metaphysical" school (granting the valid high standing of Donne)as poets of a primary order or as representatives of our main poetic current.

Allowing, then, that this new movement—a kind of Celtic Gongorism —which Barker, Thomas, and Graham best manifest, is by no means lacking in its local beauties, we believe that its work must be considered as part of the side-stream of English poetry; an internally alien body of

*This opinion I find substantiated by Anne Ridler in an essay on T. S. Eliot (Dennis Dobson-Focus 3). Speaking of tradition she writes: "it can also afford a different kind of poet, who treats words as though he were present at their creation—a Dylan Thomas or a George Barker—but only if the main channel is kept clear. These are the luxury of a strong tradition: they effect a renewal of words, but it is as transient as a dose of benzedrine on a human being."

writing whose idiom and influence should be received with circumspection.

To conclude—in case this essay should appear negatory with reference to the field of present verse—I should like to quote five lines from a poem by a writer whose work, I feel, bears all the marks of the main English poetic lineage:

"And now the tide takes the insolent sea
Off the rockface and the camp of limpets,
Over the sea-weed, and spreadeagled
Starfish, and the soak of sand. The ship
Has flown, anticipating the fallen sun."*

Comparing this, with the passages of Barker, we see how much more concrete it is. There is none of that vague inflated froth of words; and even in the heavily alliterative fourth line, with its musical epithet "soak of sand", the sense stays serenely moored in facts. This is not to suggest that we ought to estimate verse in terms of pedestrian accuracy. The facts must be there but they will have to be transformed: either by the word-music of the passage or the imagery in which they are presented. So in the first and second lines here, we have the Shakespearian "insolent sea" and the factual yet imaginative "camp of limpets" as proof of the poet's transforming power.

Poetry, we readily grant, demands a willing suspension of disbelief. It also requires a ground-work in the actual. Like Shelley's sky-lark it may climb the empyrean, but its home is on the earth and not in hot air.

*From a poem "The Ship" by Christopher Fry, author of two verse-dramas: "A Phoenix too Frequent" and "The First Born".

LUNCH-TIME POETRY READINGS

BY

ALAN PHILLIPS

I have always suspected that those terms in physiognomy which novelists delight in—the sensuous nose, the ascetic forehead—are mostly nonsense; and anybody who would undertake to tell, simply by looking at people, whether they are the sort to enjoy poetry, should organize regular readings and be agreeably astonished at the audience. In 1943, for one experimental month, I hired a room at the Kingsway Hall and gave lunch-time readings four days a week. Other series have followed, reduced first to two days a week and finally to Thursdays only, with breaks for several months at a time. The sixth series began last September, and if the present level of attendance keeps up, I hope to run it until the first of July.

Women weighed down with shopping baskets; Servicemen in town on leave; typists with sandwiches; students from King's College; professors and poets, and one old man who I am sure was a crossing-sweeper; I have had them all, some not missing a meeting for months, most arriving irregularly, and one man who told me, "I'm in London only once a year and make a point of coming to this." It is good fun, vigorous ready for the unexpected, on occasion even thrilling. There was the time when a lady wearing black dropped a note on the table and went hurriedly away, leaving what I found to be a letter, without name or address, to the effect that poetry was a great comfort in wartime, and enclosing a five-pound note to cover several weeks' hire of the hall. For all of this of course I could never thank her.

There are naturally the offers of help. These must be politely discouraged. I know the formula by heart; always it ends with a suggestion that the visitor might read his or her own work. Also one must be chary of announcing too many programmes of requests, for people are apt to vanish after hearing a special item. But the plebiscite now and again gives a clue to programme building. Thirty people asked for requests named 28 different poets (Keats was wanted twice and *The Great Lover* by two people), including several I had never included.

I never give a poem twice in any series of readings. Besides the accredited masterpieces and favourites—the *Elegy,* the *Intimations,* the *Nightingale,* the *Rubaiyat, The Hound of Heaven,* naturally come round, with excerpts from *Childe Harold,* the *Essay on Man,* the *Ancient Mariner,* Shakespearean speeches, and all the sonnets and lyrics of anthologies——there is the temptation, not exactly to plug, but to coax into acceptance, personal delights. Have I roused in any an enthusiasm for the slender texture of Edward Thomas or the charming sonnets of Daniel? Can I win popularity for Spenser and Donne, or show that the greatest living poets are old men like Hilaire Belloc? I do not know. But that is not the point. To cast the net wide, exploit all styles and periods, hear somebody ask, "Where can I look up, or copy out, such-and-such"?—that is the aim. Only a supreme judge of poetry could achieve perfect proportional representation, and then he might lose something of personality, even humanity, in his approach to the job.

ON SUBJECT AND TREATMENT IN POETRY

BY

LEWIS WILSHIRE

Every poet has his own peculiar method of composition. Sometimes composition results from an immediate and urgently compelling inspiration; sometimes it is a slower process, of a more architectural quality. But certain it is that, in most cases, the selection of metaphor and the creation of imagery is not so much a deliberate, careful *choice* as a spontaneous act of divination, in which the greater part has perhaps been played by the subconscious, or intuitive faculty, or soul—whichever you prefer. It is primarily an emotional act, or resultant from an emotional state: and perhaps that is why the English have excelled in the art, for the English language is one that lends itself better than most to the description and evocation of the emotional. As Lord David Cecil points out in *The English Poets:*

"English is a poet's language. It is ideally suited for description or for the expression of emotion. It is flexible, it is varied, it has an enormous vocabulary; able to convey every subtle diverse shade, to make vivid before the mental eye any picture it wishes to conjure up. . . . There is no better language in the world for touching the heart and setting the imagination aflame."

We can regard poetry, then, as the embodiment of a particular emotional stimulus in phrases and imagery which are as intensely personal and evocative as the poet can make them. But even this needs a qualification. The evocation should (indeed *must*) be personal: but it must also be universal. It must be close to the heart, cut from the bone; yet one must always be sure that its degree of "personalisation" does not make it inexplicable to the general reader. A common fault of many recent poets—even those of some standing—is that they have used connotations which are so wholly personal, so dependent on a particular thought-pattern or background of ideas and experience, that they lack any kind of universality. These poets are not addressing themselves to a public. They are not fulfilling what I conceive to be the poet's power and privilege—not, that is to say, *sharing*. They are merely talking to themselves.

In this connection it is interesting to consider the point of view of the late Professor A. E. Housman. As a distinguished scholar, the greater part of whose life was spent within the precincts of a university,it would have been all too easy for him to have fallen into a pedantic and thought dominated style of utterance. That he did not do so is to his credit, and our delight:

The chestnut casts his flambeaux, and the flowers
Stream from the hawthorn on the wind away,
The doors clap to, the pane is blind with showers.
Pass me the can, lad; there's an end of May.

There's one spoilt spring to scant our mortal lot,
One season ruined of our little store.
May will be fine next year as like as not:
Oh ay, but then we shall be twenty-four.

And again, but differently:

Shot? so quick, so clean an ending?
Oh that was right, lad, that was brave:
Yours was not an ill for mending,
'Twas best to take it to the grave.

Oh you had forethought, you could reason,
And saw your road, and where it led,
And early wise and brave in season
Put the pistol to your head.

Here a man is speaking to other men, in a language of absolute simplicity and universality. There is no trace of the Cambridge professor here—indeed, had there been it would have been disastrous—for poetry is, as has been suggested already, an emotional rather than an intellectual medium. Its affinities are with music and feeling, though it can sometimes be used as a persuasive medium if the imagery is strong enough; as, in that very memorable and heart-searing little poem by W. H. Davies, *The Truth:*

Since I have seen a bird one day,
His head pecked more than half away;
That hopped about, with but one eye,
Ready to fight again, and die—
Oft-times since then their private lives
Have spoilt that joy their music gives.

So, when I see this robin now,
Like a red apple on the bough,
And question why he sings so strong,
For love, or for the love of song;
Or sings, maybe, for that sweet rill
Whose silver tongue is never still—

Ah, now there comes this thought unkind,
Born of the knowledge in my mind:
He sings in triumph that last night
He killed his father in a fight;
And now he'll take his mother's blood—
The last strong rival for his food.

But in poetry fact does not dictate quality. An opposite point of view is equally memorable, equally acceptable. Being a thing of mood, the poem evokes—not dictates—the essence. Here is Walter de la Mare disagreeing profoundly with W. H. Davies, yet not the less convincing in his view of the lower orders of creation.

What lovely things
Thy hand hath made:
The smooth-plumed bird
In its emerald shade,
The seed of the grass,
The speck of stone
Which the wayfaring ant
Stirs, and hastes on.

Is one of these points-of-view less *true* than the other? I think not. Both are the results of observation, coloured by mood, balanced by interpretation. They are both facets of reality, though they are different facets.

II.

The poetry-verse controversy is an old one but may be of rather special interest to the beginner and student. *Must poetry have a definite rhyme and rhythm-scheme? If not, how can one distinguish between poetry and prose?*

These are vexed questions: the cause of a good deal of argument, discussion, and mutual recrimination. The traditionalist, for the most part, asserts that a poem should conform to a specific arrangement of metrical feet. His appreciation of a poem depends—at least partially—on its form and scansion. And he believes that the line-endings should bear a pause, and ring. A good many modern poets, however, take rhyme and metre less seriously than was once customary, and they have, as a result, been told that what they write is not poetry at all. They, on the other hand, assert that the traditionalists are mere rhymers and versifiers, whose proper province is the Christmas and Birthday card, that the greatest poets have seldom taken much account of the conventional iambics and dactyls and so on, which are the touchstone

of traditional assessment. Whilst the latter seems to me very questionable, since tradition is, after all, the accumulated experience of those same great poets (tradition implies recognition and acceptance of past greatness: iconoclasm denies it)—it is certainly a fact that rhyme and scansion are far less a feature of some other countries' poetry. In Gaelic, for instance, according to Sean Jennett, our conventional rhyming of vowel *and* consonant is seldom used. Instead great use is made of assonance, a device which was adopted by Wilfred Owen as a sort of half-rhyme, giving greater freedom of expression and suggesting rather than chiming.

Another serious difference of opinion among contemporary poets is on the score of subject, a matter which was referred to earlier in this essay. Rigid traditionalists assert that the subject-matter of poetry is restricted to a definite number of specific themes, such as love, death, nature, freedom, beauty, and so on. A good many of the moderns, however, believe there is no restriction on thematic material, and think nothing of dealing with such subjects as pylons, electric light, socialism, prostitution, atomic energy, cigarette ends and beef steaks. Here, for instance, is William Empson:

Not locus if you will but envelope,
Paths of light not atoms of good form;
Such tangent praise, less crashing, not less warm,
May gain more intimacy for less hope.

And later in the same poem:

Duality too has its Principal;
These lines you grant me may invert to points;
Or paired, poor grazing misses, at your joints,
Cross you on painless arrows to the wall.

The characteristic title of this effort is *Letter V. . . .*

Another example is taken from an early poem of Stephen Spender's, *The Express*. Actually Spender's attitude seems to have been subsequently modified, and his recent poetry is far more lyrical and musical. But *The Express* is fairly representative of the best work of the Pylon school.

After the first powerful plain manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,
The gasworks. . . .

And Mr. Eliot's impression of morning in the city, from *Preludes*

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.
With the other masquerades
That time resumes,
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

If I had to give any personal opinion on the rival merits of traditional as compared with iconoclast, I should probably make use of some such Joadism as "It all depends . . .", and it does. If the man is a poet the chances are that he will infuse his material with poetry, whereas the mere innovator or versifier will not. And apart from that—experiment is a useful thing in any medium, as long as it is recognised as such, and not claimed to be some completely revolutionary and self-sufficient form. Only time—and the greater testing of re-examination and repetition—will separate the true poets from the pseudoists. Meanwhile, one thing is certain: both the facile sentiment and the casual reportage will be weighed in the balance and found wanting. The poem that is created from an inner need and urgent experience will tend to be the more memorable. So would-be poets—of whatever type and inclination—would be well advised to avoid the more overworked (and therefore coarsened) phrases and imagery; for to use them, without feeling the full impact of their urgency, is to be merely imitative and second-hand.

Say what you have to say in the way you have to say it, preferably with humility and some appreciation of the poets who have gone before. But what your way is, and just how you are going to tread it, you must ultimately fight out for yourself.

THE HID BATTLEMENTS[1]

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO A STUDY OF ENGLISH MYSTICAL AND DEVOTIONAL POETRY

BY

DALLAS KENMARE

PART I

God appears, and God is Light
To those poor souls who dwell in Night,
But does a human form display
To those who dwell in realms of Day.
(*William Blake*).

The finest mystical and devotional poetry throughout the ages has been written by those poets to whom God "a human form displays," in other words, the essence of such poetry is the sense of Divine immanence, of God everywhere, "every bush and tree afire with God," by Whose grace all is seen "apparelled in celestial light." The great lovers of God have written of Him as their friend, breath of their breath, nearer than any human lover, the only companion of the soul. Indeed, the realisation of ultimate aloneness, when man discovers that no human companion, however dear, can share the secrets and dearest intimations of his inmost heart, is an earnest of the companionship of God, "to Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid." God's voice is heard in wind and wave and tree, caressing, consoling, his touch irradiating, his love transfiguring:

It was my love's script, I knew his hand:
He had been writing his signature on the land,
His name which only lovers can understand,[2]

It is the "invisible heart of flame in the things seen."[3]

Strange that this stupendous experience, this immense conviction of meaning and glory which alone gives to life enduring richness and is the only clue to our darkest riddles, should be so long evaded, that God should be shouldered out of human life, unwanted, ignored, when He alone has power to heal and redeem. "Despised and rejected of men," Christ, the Man of Sorrows, but, in Blake's words, "the bright preacher of

[1] Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds,
From the hid battlements of Eternity. Francis Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven.*
[2] Joyce Biddell. *The Signature.*
[3] Ibid.

life", walks the earth to-day as visibly as he walked beside the Lake of Galilee nearly two thousand years ago, and his form is not hidden, only the seeing eye is lacking. On the first Easter morning, his body, perfectly spiritualised and therefore empowered to overcome death and dissolution, left the grave and proved that if men too could learn the secret they could triumph over bodily limitations, since the body is no more than the instrument of the spirit, and can become so obedient to its wise behests that no healing, no power to overcome disease, and at last even death itself, seems miraculous but only obedience to natural, which is spiritual, law. And at Pentecost Christ's promise, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," was fulfilled.

English literature is rich in mystical and devotional poetry, a great cloud of witnesses testifies to the glory and omnipresence of God. Even before William Langland, who sang as the mists of the Dark Ages began to roll away, two remote Anglo-Saxon poets, Caedmon and Cynewulf, in the seventh and eighth centuries, sang of the glory of God and of Creation, Caedmon in obedience to a dream-vision. Then much later came—to mention only a few—George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw, Thomas Traherne, the great John Donne, preacher and poet, and Milton, and later William Blake, Shelley (not a devotional poet, but unquestionably a mystic[1]), Robert Browning, a great Christian poet, Francis Thompson, Alice Meynell, Coventry Patmore, Gerard Manley Hopkins. These are some of the great ones of the past, and, thanks be to God, this present winter of our discontent is not left without witnesses, and here and there beautiful devotional and mystical poetry is being written, to which reference will be made later. Indeed, the material throughout the centuries is so rich the selection is bewilderingly difficult.

The work of some of these poets is outstanding for its quality of purity and peace, others for simplicity and innocence; in others the predominant note is ecstasy and fire. Thomas Traherne for example, is known as the poet of felicity; he lived in a constant awareness of God's immanence, seeing "the world in a grain of sand, and heaven in a wild flower." So he was happy; he had learned the only secret worth discovering, the true secret of felicity which is heaven on earth, and with the knowledge came, as to all mystics, the overpowering, the infinitely blessed, sense of wonder and joy. He had learned "All blessedness, a life with Glory crown'd."(2) He was a poet of joy, and would have none of the morbid notion that unhappiness on earth ensures happiness hereafter; God, he knew, longs to make His people joyful here and now, so he was filled with the life that is immortal even in the days of our mortality:

. . . I within did flow

[1] In spite of his notorious pamphlet *The Necessity for Atheism.*
[2] *Of Contentment.*

With seas of life, like wine,
I nothing in the world did know
But 'twas divine.[1]

And he was a poet of innocence: he came to know, as, again, all the mystics have discovered, that the state of regeneration, the birth into true life, inevitably requires a return to the child-like state Jesus referred to in the words "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." But this innocence is not what Swedenborg calls the "external innocence" of children. It is the profound innocence of maturity, and born of suffering. In the chapter on "The State of Innocence of the Angels in Heaven" in *Heaven and Hell* Swedenborg says:

What innocence is and what is its quality, is known by few in the world . . .

The innocence of infancy, or of little children is not genuine innocence, and not its internal form.

The innocence of wisdom is genuine innocence, because it is internal, for it is of the mind itself, and thus of the will itself, and thence of the understanding. Hence it is said in heaven that innocence dwells in wisdom, and that an angel has as much wisdom as he has of innocence. (p. 181-183).

So Traherne, pondering on his childhood in the poem *Innocence*, ends with the words, "I must become a child again." This essential state of mature innocence is akin to the "emptying" and "self-naughting" of the mystics, for it is the outcome of long purgation and travail, when suffering has cleansed the self and left it empty and receptive as in childhood, ready to be filled with light and truth. The ego has been discarded and the purity and innocence of the early years on earth regained. This is truly "Paradise regained," after Paradise has been lost in the years of worldly delight.

The bliss Traherne attained he voices in the lines:

That light, that sight, that thought,
Which in my soul at first He wrought,
Is sure the only act to which I may
Assent to-day . . .
. . .
It is a fountain or a spring,
Refreshing me in everything.
From whence these living streams I do derive,
By which my thirsty soul is kept alive.
The centre and the sphere
Of my delights are here.
It is my David's tower
Where all my armour lies,

[1] *Wonder.*

The fountain of my power,
My bliss, my sacrifice.

Traherne's was the gospel, the "good news" indeed, of joy, contentment, unworldliness. Everywhere he found wonder and beauty, because everywhere he found God. All knowledge, all life, were gateways to happiness —felicity—for the man who had discovered the secret he proclaimed in his poems. And he knew that to learn the art of true happiness, wisdom must be sought in single-minded humility, that the only lasting happiness lies in blessedness, that God has indeed "prepared for them that love Him such good things as pass man's understanding." And Traherne knew, too, that to find God it was first necessary to discover the true self hidden in every man: he knew and proclaimed that only through self-development in the highest sense was it possible to become a blessing to all mankind. "The pool." he said, "in order to overflow to others must first be filled itself." Another poet some two hundred years later, Matthew Arnold, declared:

Resolve to know thyself, and know that he
Who finds himself loses his misery.

The search for the true self is the search for God, and in finding it, the delusive ego is lost. It is the ego to which men cling, deeming it of paramount importance and value, even the very fount of life itself. So when Jesus said "He who loses his life for My sake shall find it," He meant the mount importance and value, even the very fount of life itself. So when loss of the false self, the ego, which is mistakenly believed to be the "life." Psychology, the science of the psyche, or self, is therefore a valuable help towards true understanding and emancipation, but psychology alone is inadequate. Regeneration can come only through an influx of grace.

"Holy, holy, holy." In Verdi's great *Requiem Mass* the *Sanctus* is a triumphant shout of praise, recalling the words, "The morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy." The same strong, bold and triumphantly adoring spirit animates the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, one of the greatest devotional and mystical poets of the last hundred years. His ecstatic love of Nature is naturally an aspect of his love of God, the Creator of all the beauty he so passionately worships:

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh fire-coal chestnut-falls; finches' wings.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.[1]

The same worship echoes in the rapturous cry:

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting n the air![2]

no less than in the glorious poem *Hurrahing for Harvest*:

. . .
I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?
And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

For the poet who has found his way back to Paradise, there is no worship of Nature without worship of God. Hopkins is a poet who adores and worships God on the mountain-tops, with arms outstretched to "all the glory in the heavens"; his work is a passionate affirmation, his prayer is praise, there is little or no supplication; even the so-called "terrible" sonnets are vivid with powerful, stormy, never weak or pitiful, imagery:

Not, I'll not, carrion-comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me or, most weary, cry *I can no more.* I can.
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

[1] *Pied Beauty.*
[2] *The Starlight Night.*

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou
rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lion-limb
against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruisèd bones? and
fan
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic
to avoid thee and flee?[1]

And again in Sonnet 41; where he cries:

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomèd. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there.

Always his powerful mind scaled the summits of spiritual experience, and "hold them cheap" indeed "May who ne'er hung there." There are affinities here with Francis Thompson's famous poem *The Hound of Heaven,* a kinship in forceful and vigorous imagery, a similar sense of the tremendous and "world-wielding" nature of spiritual conflict:

Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed,
followed after.
. . .
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue,
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven
Plashy with flying lightnings round the
spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
. . .
Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn
from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly. . . .
. . .

[1] *Sonnet* 40.

In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years. . . .

John Donne, also, is of the same brotherhood:

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke
to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me,
and bend
Your force to breake, blow, burn and make
me new.[1]

The poetry of George Herbert is a notable contrast to the virile, deeply impassioned work of Hopkins, Thompson and Donne. Herbert's nature was one which can well be called "naturally divine." His love-sonnets were addressed to God, and often he laments the realisation that he cannot love God as he should, but he knew little of the quality of conflict that tore the wrestling souls of the other three poets. In the beautiful poem *Love*, there is a restful simplicity, and "dust and sin," though mentioned, are really shadowy, and play no predominant part:

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here";
Love said "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee."
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not." says Love, "Who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

[1] *Holy Sonnet XIV.*

There is a deeply moving simplicity in the form of address; no other devotional poet would have called his Lord "My dear." But Herbert "crept to the throne of grace"[1]; he did not fight his way through brambles and over rough stones to the mountain of glory which Hopkins, Thompson and Donne sought with relentless, predestined passion.

Henry Vaughan was to some extent influenced by Herbert, whose poetry he greatly admired, for he saw in the saintly life the only solution to the problems of his own troubled mind. But Vaughan's poetry developed on different lines, for he was essentially a mystic, while Herbert was an ascetic, and in the work of the two poets the important but scarcely definable difference between mystical and devotional poetry is most evident. Vaughan's poetry approximated far more closely to Milton's description "simple, sensuous and passionate," and soars far beyond conventional expression, deriving from the dimension where convention and conventional forms have no meaning. The spirit of devotional poetry is to a great extent bound by ecclesiastical convention: dogma and doctrine, while mystical poetry soars to the very spirit and heart of faith, the heart of God, whence it came and whither it inevitably returns. In mystical poetry, too, there is usually a tendency to identification with Nature and a profusion of Nature-imagery: Vaughan, for example, in the well-known poem *Peace* (famous as the hymn "My soul there is a country . . . ") writes:

> There grows the flower of Peace,
> The Rose that cannot wither,

and in the exquisite *Friends Departed* he writes of

> . . . Those faint beams in which this hill is dres't
> After the sun's remove,

and of the "fledg'd bird's nest." The mystic always sees "heaven in a wild flower," and believes, as Kingsley believed, that "Beauty is God's handwriting."

There are affinities between Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw: Crashaw, too, was more mystical than devotional, his poetry abounding in Nature-imagery and an ecstatic love of heaven, and intimations of heaven on earth. His famous *Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa* begins with the words:

> Love, thou art absolute, sole Lord
> Of life and death . . .

and writing of the saint's welcome in heaven, he says:

> Angels, thy old friends, there shall greet thee,
> Glad at their own home now to meet thee . . .

[1] *Discipline.*

All thy old woes shall now smile on thee,
And thy pains sit bright upon thee;
All thy sorrows here shall shine,
And thy sufferings be divine.
Tears shall take comfort, and turn gems,
And wrongs repent to diadems.

The mystical, more than the devotional, poets live in the awareness that "here we have no continuing city," and much of the strange beauty of their writing derives from their nostalgia for the "country Far beyond the stars."

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.[1]

(To be continued)

[1] *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*. Wordsworth.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Madam,

I have read with interest your December Editorial, and may I make a few simple remarks on some of the subjects touched upon in it? I take it that every poet has a message to deliver, inspired by his (or her) own particular Muse, and is it not to the poet's own advantage as well as that of his message that what is said should be clothed as attractively as possible? Surely the form is but the clothing, and the message is the all-important thing; then if the clothing is sufficiently attractive will not some of those who are on the lookout solely for pleasure be induced to absorb the message unconsciously?

I have just recently heard of a prize essay at Oxford whose subject for the year is "In poetry subject is nothing, form is all." This looks like turning things upside down, and regarding the clothing as more important than the person who wears it and suggests that the subject is only the puppet on which clothing is set out for sale in a fashion display.

It has been suggested that it took Gray 30 years to write the order of the seven words in "The ploughman homeward plods his weary way," and at least one clever man prides himself that he could write it in 40 different arrangements. No one can find much fault with the accepted wording and the whole poem reflects infinite pains in its production, while many read it and re-read it on account of its attractiveness alone.

Is not much of the complained formlessness due to lack of care on the poet's part? We used to be told in days gone by that only a highly accredited writer dare take liberties with rhyme and metre. To-day everything seems to be drifting downwards on the "Doesn't matter" basis, and the infinite care that used to be taken is abandoned. It takes too much time and trouble to write and re-write until the highest and best effect is attained.

I am, etc.,

GEORGE S. PURNELL

Madam,

Your December Editorial raises some controversial points, and on the question as to whether poetry should "give pleasure" is at variance with the views of at least one well-known modern poet. In his delightful book, *The Poetic Image,* Mr. C. Day Lewis refers (p. 39) to a Victorian author named E. S. Dallas, and says :—"What is most sympathetic to me about Dallas is the vivacity with which he maintained that the object of all art is to give pleasure." I am inclined to think that "pleasure" is too mild a word, and should in any case be interpreted in a very wide sense. Surely

anything that causes us to realise "the adamantine pebble of divinity which persists in our deepest core" does give us pleasure in the highest degree—perhaps better described as "delight" or "ecstasy"—even when we are "stormed, besieged, and broken asunder."

Although "circumstances of the subconscious mind" may often be the modern poet's subject, Mr. Day Lewis would agree about the need to denounce incompatible form and formlessness. He sums this matter up very convincingly on p. 117:—"Our world, our minds, may be in a state of chaos. But it is the business of the poetic reason to create order out of chaos: and, even if its business were merely to give an imaginative reproduction of chaos, it must still employ formal pattern to do so."

I am, etc.,

EVA MARTIN

Madam,

May I offer you warm congratulations on the publication, in the December 1947 issue of *The Poetry Review,* of the essay on "The Psychology of Poetry," by T. A. Agius. Although such was not the writer's avowed object, the essay did contain a magnificent statement of the true relationship between poetry and living: it related the creative activity of the poet, in its correct and just measure, to the larger creative activity in which, and by which, the poet himself lives. That, I think, needed doing and here has been done splendidly.

It seems to me—and this must be my defence for writing to you—to offer an explanation of much of the phenomena of "modern" poetry which your leading article defended and, in fact, to be an admirable complementary comment on your own editorial.

I suggest that, given the necessary qualities of imagination and technique, a poet writes essentially of things which he comprehends more deeply than the ordinary man. The deeper that comprehension, the deeper the poetry will be. Hence the tortured convolutions of "modern" poetry express, with tragic clearness, the uncohering desolation of the poet's spirit. He too is seeking, as all intelligent men must, to integrate his own creative activity with the larger creative activity of which he is a part. It is true that:

"The drift of pinions, would we hearken
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors"

but there is so much to distract even the most anxious listeners.

As you so rightly argue, the "modern" poet is entitled to serious attention. His poems are spiritual autobiography. In that sense, indeed, there is no such thing as a *modern* poet for he has this in common with all his ancestors and with all his progeny. (I exclude, as you do, the mere poseur and exhibitionist who cannot be a poet anyhow and thus excludes himself from serious consideration.)

Little as I like the embattled chaos which I find in his poetry, unrepentant traditionalist as I am, I do feel strongly that the "modern" poet who is seeking this integration really requires no defence. He is invulnerable.

May I, please, raise just one more point? You ask in your editorial: "Since when . . . was it more than an incidental function of art to give pleasure?" I would answer: "From the beginning!" Because, surely, the object of the poetic art is to express, in its own medium, apprehended truth. The apprehension of truth satisfies the mind of man and, satisfying, gives it pleasure inevitably, of its own very nature. We are back, you see, full circle, whence we started. Is it not always a question of integrating the cause and purpose of creative poetic activity—in so far as the medium itself permits—with the greater creative activity of the uncaused first Cause of which T. A. Agius writes?

I am, etc.,

J. G. Miles

Madam,

Four members of the Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse have launched a series of Broadsheets of poetry, under the title of "*The New Athenian Broadsheets*." The contributors are, mainly, living Scottish poets; the Broadsheets sell at one shilling per copy. They appear, roughly, quarterly and are available, in limited numbers, at most Edinburgh booksellers.

The first number of the series,—containing Scottish poems of place,—has been reprinted. The second number, comprising Christmas and Winter poems, was published at Christmas, 1947. The third number with Spring and Summer poems by Edwin Muir, Jan Struther, George Campbell Hay and seven others, will appear in March, 1948, and a fourth number, containing poems on Scottish Lore, Legend and History, is planned for the summer of 1948. The contributors to the first two numbers have included:—Lewis Spence, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Sir Alexander Gray A. V. Stuart, Douglas Young, Joe Corrie, Helen, Cruickshank and William Soutar.

All MSS. and correspondence are to be sent to The Editor, The New Athenian Broadsheets, 45 Plewlands Gardens, Edinburgh, 10.

I am, etc.,

The Editorial Committee,

The New Athenian Broadsheets

Madam,

A famous Shakespearian, who prefers to remain anonymous, having given an adverse opinion on my "History of the First Folio of the Workes of William Shakespeare," which appeared in your issue of June, last year, I beg space for the following items that I have since discovered, which I hope may lead him to reconsider his decision, and your readers to find of interest.

In Isaac Reed's 1813 edition of the Plays, is mentioned Steevens' suggestion "Perhaps Old Ben was author of the 'Players' Preface' (in the First Folio) and in the instance before us, has borrowed from himself." The "instance" is the remarkable similarity between part of the "Players' Preface" and the following extract from the induction to Johnson's "Bartholomew Fair," produced nine years before the Folio was published.

> —it shallbe lawful for any man to judge his sixpen-worth, his twelve-pen'worth, so to his eighteen pence, two shillings, half a crown, to the value of his place: providing always his place get not above his wit. And if he pay for half dozen, he may censure for all them too, so that he will undertake that they shall not be silent. He shall put in for censurers here, as they do for lots at the lottery: marry, if he drop but sixpence at the door, and will censure a crowns-worth, it is thought there is no conscience of justice in that.

The parallel passage in the Players' Preface is as follows—

> —you wil stand for your priviledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soever your braines be, or your wisedomes, make your licence the same, and spare not. Judge your sixe-pen'worth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, what ever you do, Buy.

It will be noticed that Jonson was addressing play-goers, and, the Publishers of the Folio, readers. A living authority has stated that Jonson read the First Folio proofs and as his immortal poem "To the Memory of my beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare" (which concludes with commendatory mention of the book) is on the page following the Preface, there is no doubt that he was aware of all the circumstances attending the publication, but as fine writers are averse to repeating themselves, and as Heminge and Condell ("the Publishers") were doubtlessly familiar with "Bartholomew Fair" and its induction, it is a moot point whether they or Jonson reproduced so closely the above quotation in the Folio preface.

In my opinion, both the Dedication and the Address "To the Great Variety of Readers" are feats of composition beyond the *unaided* scope

of the Publishers, for whoever wrote them must have left something more that the world "would not willingly let die" and there appears no evidence that either Heminge or Condell ever attempted authorship. There is an astuteness in the phrasing of the Dedication that ill assorts with the Publishers' inability to manage their affairs with the printers, while the description of Heminge and Condell as "a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the living and the dead" reads like Jonson giving them a character, rather than a self-description by two modest men.

Jonson "was one of the most learned men of his age and his fertility of invention matched his learning" and, if as seems very probable from the foregoing, he assisted the Publishers in writing both the dedication and the address to readers, that would place beyond all doubt the proposition I made in June of last year, that in "the office of their care and paine, to have collected and printed them," "care" applies to the collecting and "pain" to the printing, for no-one would suggest that *Jonson* would have penned the phrase without such being his intention, or that he was unaware of the well-known method employed in its construction. Pope used it in the couplet—

> There marched the bard and blockhead, side by side,
> Who rhymed for hire and patronized for pride.

leaving it to the reader to find out that it was the bard who rhymed and the (wealthy) blockhead who patronized. So it seems that the Publishers were indebted to Jonson for finding a way to denounce the fraud of the printers, by a literary strategem that would not have occurred to themselves. And what poetic justice it was to get the printers to set up the accusation of their own double-dealing!

That Jaggard was an unprincipled man, who printed spurious quarto editions of Shakespeare's plays has been shewn by Professor A. W. Pollard and Dr. W. W. Greg, as mentioned in the Cambridge edition of Midsummer Night's Dream, page 77, "the Roberts quarto, so far from being 'printed by Roberts, 1600' was actually printed, together with eight other Shakespearian or pseudo-Shakespearian texts, by William Jaggard in 1619. It was in fact a fake" and page vii they "conclusively established that the date 1600 is fraudulent." Also, the Irving edition of the Merchant of Venice says "it is evident, from the entry in the Stationers' Register, that Roberts had obtained his copy surreptitiously," hence it appears this was one of Jaggard's quartos, for it was dated 1600. These condemnations of Jaggard's fraud strongly support my charge against Blount and Jaggard, for they prove the latter to have been a rogue, and, in similar fashion, my exposure of him, and his partner, substantiates the denunciation of Jaggard by Pollard-Greg and Irving.

That the same hand was at work in both the Dedication and the Address is evidenced by the continuation of the metaphor employed, from the one to the other. In the former, the plays are referred to as "orphans" that have out-lived their author and the Publishers say they have "but collected them—to procure his orphans, guardians." and in the latter are mentioned "surreptitious copies" (of the plays) "maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious imposters, that expos'd them" (like abandoned children) "even those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes;"

It has been suggested that the company, in the assets of which Heminge and Condell were financially interested, received payment for permission to print the plays, but Digges said "thy *pious* fellowes *give* thy workes" and he would not have said that if they had *sold* them; that neither the Publishers nor even Shakespeare himself would have expected to see the proofs, but what author was ever content to leave himself at the mercy of the printers! and Knight, speaking of such Quartos as are authentic, mentions "the jealous care with which Shakespeare watched over the more important of these productions." that the plays were not read to the compositor, but that is discredited by the many errors that cannot very well be accounted for otherwise than by misreading and mishearing; that Jaggard and Blount took the whole risk of the venture, but, in such case, they would not have been content to print Dedication and Address in which the Publishers were given the whole credit, and more especially as Blount had literary ambitions of his own.

In the Address to Readers it says "Judge your sixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the just rates." It is difficult to see how a reader could vary the amount of his right to judge of the merit of the plays unless they were sold separately, as they were in the quarto editions, some of which were collected, also, to form a volume. Professor Pollard said he saw two such volumes, both containing the same editions of the same plays. That the surviving copies of the First Folio differ from each other, favours the theory that the sale methods of the Quartos were followed in the case of the Folios, save that the plays were not sold separately until after the publication of the volume. Steevens estimated the Folio edition numbered 250 copies and that appears barely sufficient to have made the venture pay, unless, in addition, copies of each play were sold separately. Perhaps one such copy may yet be found? As the price of the book was one pound, one of the shorter plays could have been sold for sixpence, two for a shilling and so on.

I am, etc.,

HOWARD PARSONS.

Madam,

Dylan Thomas: A Further Estimate

Though Mr. Dylan Thomas's first book of poems appeared in 1934 I still sometimes wonder whether his verse is the product of a buffoon with a flair for poetry or of a poet with a taste for buffoonery. For years I have been prying steadily deeper into the spiralling recesses of Mr. Thomas's imaginative perspective, sometimes enraptured by vistas of wonder and surprise, more often "imbrangled" in the preposterous mazes of his baroque rhetoric.

I thought I had found a solution to the riddle of his poetic personality when I heard him read some of his own poems, but later, without the stimulus of his incantatory splendours the same and other poems became once more enigmatic variations on the libidinous obliquity of Mr. Thomas's cataclysmic vocabulary, festooned with cryptics and laminated with demi-idioms in a disgusting but irresistibly intriguing omelette of grammatical rarities, verbally exciting but syntactically obscure.

His work has been accepted and enjoyed as well as understood by many of the literate minority in these islands. Nevertheless, there must be many an ordinary reader of poetry who can see in his poems only a goulache composed of the chewed fag-ends of inspired phrases, pitched helter-skelter into the spitoon of memory and discharged in a dishevelled stream as a result of cerebral agitation.

This is not true of every poem. "The Hand That Signed the Paper," has an allegorical grimness which neither allows nor needs any phantasy of diction to make it powerful and true: the basic conceit of "When All my Five and Country Senses See" is admirably neat; and the poem "In Memory of Anne Jones," whose "fist of a face died clenched in a round of pain," knows a dignity and pathos which no eccentricity of metaphor can mask nor deformity of syntax conceal.

Many of Mr. Thomas's more formal allusions and cross-associations are eclectic echoes from apocryphal contexts and subconscious recollections of sharply-précised day-dreams. Such a highly specialised technique deters the reader who likes poetry for pleasure but has been made suspicious of philological smatterings.

Aided by a good dictionary the reader will discover that much apparent nonsense is superficial only. A very common source of puzzlement for Mr. Thomas's readers lies in his fondness for archaic terms and names of things and persons and activities which are obsolete or supplanted in the vocabulary of everyday life, but to solve such synonyms is not to reach the end of one's troubles. Mr. Thomas has other tricks of vocabulary calculated to confuse the audience which is not alert to his every whim or is function-frozen in its attitude to language. A popular Dylan device is the use of nouns, with the addition of -ed, as past participles. Thus, we have "the studded male" and "cataracted

eyes," where the gain is in economy, for otherwise he would have had to use constructions like "the male who has been put to stud" or "the eyes covered with a film of cataract"; and there is usually added a metrical snugness and sleekness which enhances the formal structure of the verse.

A similar verbal trick is the use of a noun as a present verb. He writes: "The lips of time *leech* to the fountain head," or speaks of someone who will "atlas the few seas."

But mere verbal trickery does not make poetry worth study. Simile and metaphor are the essence of poetry and on his achievement Dylan Thomas should be more roundly judged. It cannot be claimed that his choice of comparisons as a rule is anything but unusual but to dismiss it as eccentric or deliberately insincere is to mistake the reality of his inspiration for the counterfeit of exhibitionism. It is not affectation which lends strange beauty to his comparison in—

When like a running grave time tracks you down,

but a keen consciousness of the close relation of the inevitability of death to the inexorable progress of the years and the inescapable symbolism of the tomb. He is not fond of simple simile and more often guides the lava of his verbal eruptions into the compacter moulds of metaphor. He even achieves the inhuman accomplishment of witty comment in a frame of solemn metaphor. To write that—

". . . sunlight paints the shelling of their heads"

is to convey with delightful and dignified delicacy that certain persons were as bald as eggs.

Dylan Thomas's figures of speech are the product of agile imagination combined with severe intellectual penetration and foreshortened physical observation. One cannot fail to be thrilled when he speaks of "the warm safe island of my bed," or maintains that "time has ticked a heaven round the stars." We find ourselves trembling on an abyss of unintelligibility when he declares—

I learnt man's tongue, to twist the shape of thoughts
Into the story idiom of the brain.

Struggle as we may with dictionaries and grammatical relaxations there will remain large expanses of poetic territory in which Mr. Thomas has set no landmarks for the uninitiated, no beacons for the unenlightened poetry lover. Many of his war-time and post-war poems are less obscure, though it is not clear whether their comparative intelligibility is due to maturity or a concession to public incompetence. It will not do, nevertheless, to dismiss and forget the earlier works as a confusion of precociousness and preciousness. Assessment of these cannot be satisfied by cheap jibes about the reader needing to be at once an encyclopaedic student of divinity and an ardent disciple of Freud. We are bound to come eventually to the proposition that a poet's audience cannot nowadays be compelled by the verbal presentation of the equivalent of a

problem in solid geometry, translated in terms of colour and montage and affording a vague impression of neuter pleasure through mere line and shape and proportion.

With a poet such as this one may admire his intellect and deplore his thoughts, approve his technique, soothe over his cunningly coined phrases and ignore his incoherence and inconsequentiality. Unlimited research among philological curiosities, remote archives of incunabula, painstaking accumulation of personal reminiscence and biographical detail might in time make each one of Mr. Thomas's poems easy to understand and invest them with a form and a unity. Such labour, which might be justified in the case of a poet writing over three hundred years ago, cannot be justifiable in the case of a modern poet because he may appear to be writing ten years before his time.

In all creative work some great truth should lie hid. Perhaps, in the sub-metrical acrostics of Mr. Thomas's early poems, there *are* secreted some pearly globules of distilled mysticism. For most readers they must remain concealed unless Mr. Thomas chooses to issue an annotated and glossaried edition of his collected poems, and to do so would defeat the whole mission of a poet.

ANEURIN RHYS.

Madam,

Allow me to expostulate regarding a review of *The Selected Poems* of Francis Carey Slater in your last Summer issue. Mr. Slater is the most distinguished poet of South Africa, has been warmly praised by Roy Campbell, Lascelles Abercrombie, myself and others, while the present volume is prefaced by that distinguished scholar and historian R. C. K. Ensor, and the selection made by Edmund Blunden, to say nothing of the fact that it is published by the Oxford University Press. The *Poetry Review* was very appreciative of Mr. Slater's earlier volumes, but now they find the poems indifferent, and notice in them "much that is pedestrian and not a little that is merely trite." This is entirely inconsistent with the earlier attitude of *The Poetry Review*, and is therefore very captious criticism. If your readers care to buy the book they will be impressed not only by the fine shapeliness of many of the poems, but also by their rich colour and phrasing. F. C. Slater preceded Roy Campbell and, I believe, has exercised some slight influence upon him, though actually he stands nearer to Longfellow than to Roy Campbell.

I am, etc.,

HERBERT PALMER.

Editor's Note:

I would like to take this opportunity of commenting upon the points raised by my correspondents Mr. J. G. Miles and Miss Eva Martin on the subject of pleasure in its relation to poetry.

Dealing first with Mr. Miles' assertion that "from the beginning" it has been more than an incidental function of art to give pleasure I feel that the reason he offers for this view, i.e., that the "object of poetic art is to express in its own medium, apprehended truth" prevents me from considering the conclusion he draws from it, by the debatable nature of this definition. The question of what is the object of art has occupied philosophers and theorists for some thousands of years and until Mr. Miles establishes his thesis that art has an object, and if so, that it is to express in its own medium apprehended truth, I cannot consider whether the logical conclusion arising from this assumption is that apprehended truth is one and the same with pleasure.

In the light of Miss Eva Martin's definition of the word "pleasure" I am in agreement with her. However, she quotes my opinions at being at variance with those of Mr. Day Lewis in his book *The Poetic Image,* basing her argument upon the supposition that I have defined the word likewise. I think that the passage in Mr. Day Lewis's book which Miss Martin indicates does not deal with that variety of pleasure of which I plainly write in my editorial article, and whose meaning of the word is the commonest (e.g., *pleasure*-boat; *pleasure*-trip; "May I have the *pleasure* . . ."; "And we will all the *pleasures* prove . . ."; etc.)

I may be excused for making a diversion here to cite the Ancient Greek view of pleasure, since the study of the nature of pleasure was one of the traditional Greek academic subjects, and, because it was through the Greek genius that mankind began to be aware of a responsibility to humanity, it may be reasonable to suppose that they spoke with the authority of an unique enlightenment. Both Plato and Aristotle distinguish between different forms of pleasure, the main types being the pleasures of the sensual gratification (which is the commonest meaning of the word) and the pleasures to be derived from spiritual and artistic satisfaction. In my opinion, it is to the second type of pleasure that Mr. Day Lewis refers, and as the word is defined by me in my article as one which would be applied to a "baby's comforter," it would appear that I am not at real variance with him.—M.S.

THE PREMIUM REPORT AND AWARD

I am sorry to say the standard of poems being sent in for the Premium competition is still very low. It forces again on one's notice what a great deal of verse is being written to-day and how poor the quality of it is. No evocative power of imagination, no magical colours, little in the range of music beyond what is trite, stale and obvious, and worse, that the poet can have been sufficiently satisfied with this product to have entered it for a competition—which means no self-critical faculty. There is such a gap between the fair-to-moderate poem and the good poem.

When we put up the prize for this competition to £10 it was expected that we should find a considerable raising of the standard, and that all our poets, professional and amateur, might be tempted to enter these lists. That has not happened, and I wonder why. I think perhaps the professionals might be shy of appearing among the Highly Commended or even the Commended. I can appreciate that feeling. I would say then that any competitor may if he wishes it have his name reserved from publication unless he wins the Premium. And I do ask the professional poets to come in. Otherwise we are faced with this absurdity: that we pay as a prize £10 for a poem than can only be classed as second-rate. While a first-class poem like for instance John Waller's "Salamander" gets its normal contribution rate—very much less. This state of things obviously can't go on, and the natural solution, in default of an improvement of quality, is a reversion to the previous rate of Premium Awards.

The most remarkable poem in this very large batch is "The Lantern-lighted Tower" by A. Sackville Hamilton. Here at least something fresh is being said in a form which is shaped by the individual fire of the writer. Yet parts of it seem still undigested: "steely" is an awkward word steel is adjectival and doesn't need the "y," I don't see how one "conjures an easel" or what effect it would have, "consciousness of non-existence" means nothing, neither, as far as I am concerned, does "lady of the mystic motion line." Nevertheless this poem has colour, force, objectivity and a lambent atmosphere all its own. It has something of the beauty of a soap-bubble just before it breaks. Next I place "What Waits" by Mary Savidge. Without "majesty replete, unutterable"—the unutterable has no place in poetry—and with a less awkward climax this might have made a memorable poem. It asks a question worth asking, and the images in the first verse clatter live to their places and are found in harmony.

About level with these I place "Poem" by Juanita Peirse. I dislike line 6 for its anatomical inaccuracy; and the last line which mistakes violence for power. But I like the strength and depth of feeling all through the poem, I like "moth-centred" and the "glass princess without poise." I shall award £4 to Miss Hamilton and £3 each to the Misses Savidge and Peirse.

I give the Highly Commended and the Commended lists in alphabetical order:

Highly Commended

J. T. Brockway, The Hague, Holland.
Daphne M. Child, Durban, S. Africa.
Alice Harwood, Alcester.
Pamela Petten, Penn.
Mr. D. R. Reinhardt, New York.

Commended

Thomas Astore, Romford.
Hazel Griffith Davis, Kansas, U.S.A.
William Gilkeson, Carlisle.
E. M. H. Harington, Folkestone.
Sebastian Knight, Birmingham.
Miss W. V. Wall, Liverpool.
John Wheatley, Scarborough.

THE LANTERN-LIGHTED TOWER

The hushed night breathing of the South West wind
That blew before Christ was,
Before the first fish,
Blushed on the window-pane a shy caress,
Whispering lighter than a moth to a moth.

Langorous rays from the lantern lamp
Which lisps at twilight,
When the day-lids close,
Smote its soft colours on the window inside,
As gently confiding as the hushed night without.

Listening she painted a steely grey line,
Only representable,
The image of ideas;
She who was sitting sighing at the easel,
Companioning the lantern in a light-house tower.

The steely grey thickened into numerous voices,
Harp strings of David,
Melody of Saul.
The line unstraightened into vibrant paces;
The steeliness relaxed into shadowings of light.

Far away horizons rose and heaved,
Sank and trembled
Between the sky and sea;
Thrilling into consciousness of non-existence,
Floating like the lighthouse on the South Sea Coast.

Listening she added a light-blue arc,
Firmly regulated,
Compass-driven;
She who was standing conjuring the easel,
The attraction of the night wind in the lantern-lighted tower.

The light blue trembled into dragonfly wings,
Magic, translucent,
Brilliantly swift;
Rainbow colourings left their sections
And mingled beauty in a careless dance.

Sky halleluyahs echoed everywhere:
The elements un-Aeolus-yoked
Bounded in freedom;
Destroyed the set arc of convention's formulation,
At the hand of the lady of the mystic motion line.

Stopping she lowered the easel to the wall,
Shaded the lantern beams,
Curtained the window-panes;
Resolved the energy of animated freedom
Back into forms acceptable to man.

And still the hushed breathing of the South West wind
That blew before Christ was,
Before the first fish,
Blushed on the window-pane a shy caress,
Whispering lighter than a moth to a moth.

A. Sackville Hamilton.

WHAT WAITS?

What waits, unquiet, when the crowd has gone,
In the bruised earth, the dust's brief patterning,
Spent lanterns, chairs, ropes, flags awry, and fun
Fled; what spirit broods, what echoes, tangled?

What, when the tide of song has ebbed away
Floods the forsaken mind with majesty
Replete, unutterable, soon to be
Empty as moonlight on a distant sea?

What waits disconsolate in winds of spring,
In velvet petal, and the red of wine;
What waits, implacable, when laughters cease;
Is it some cast of God, or grief of mine?

MARY SAVIDGE.

POEM

O, my Spirit, I am come back,
Naked and absolute!
I accepted love at the point of the sword
And with war in the word.
I could survive the wounds and stains
When he kissed the blood away from my heart;
But never the chains.

O, my Spirit, am I the murderer,
Or he who bullied and bribed;
Keeping me moth-centred and circumscribed
In the flame of his will?
He roped me first with a silken strand,
I lay secure and safe as a secret
In a dead man's hand.
O, my Spirit, I became manacled
To the wrist of love,
And there was no more silence in my being,
And no more seeing.
I was a glass Princess but without poise;
I trembled when the storms burst over me
And was broken by the noise.

O, my Spirit, I was mistaken,
I thought love was kind;
But it blew out the candles in my mind;
He said I was mad.
Yet he returned to fondle the empty shell—
Now I am ice-cold alone in high altitudes,
—But the valleys were Hell.

JUANITA PEIRSE.

LOVE LYRIC COMPETITION

REPORT AND AWARDS

The standard of entry for this year's competition is poor, and "best" has a correspondingly diminished value. Is it that the depression of our days has killed the gift of song? Of the scores and scores of entries received, all but some two dozen were immediately thrown away as unworthy even of a second reading, and the standard of many of these was an insult to the Society from whom the sender presumably sought to obtain at least honourable mention for the poem sent in. Let it be said once again that a poem, as judged by a Society of national repute, is a set of verses of sound construction which contain a description or message of universal appeal and are lit with some spark of that indefinable but unmistakeable quality which raises them to the level of Poetry. Platitudinous sentimentality will not suffice, nor will a fierceness of feeling which so engulfs the writer that he or she forgets the necessities of the laws of verse. In these "modern" days it is often forgotten that even "free" verse has its laws, and that the looser the construction of the verses the greater must be the command of English and of the laws of rhythm and sound. Please, then, let us have more loving care in craftsmanship to express profounder feeling or profounder thought, and where the element of poetry has failed to light the result—burn it. You will know at once when you have written a POEM! Of the 25 entries which deserved a second reading some missed a prize by the lack of the hard work necessary in polishing the completed—it may be the tenth or fifteenth—draft. Some did not know when to stop. Thus Miss C. E. Mead's "Transition" was excellent as to half. At the end of the first page we were impressed, but on finding a second page which was bathos, both in design and quality, the poem as a whole had to be turned down. Some, on the other hand, wrote an excellent last verse compared with which the earlier part was trite. Thus Celia Randall's "Loss" ends splendidly.

> Yet still the steaming horses churn the lane;
> Behind, the laden waggon jolts and jars;
> Still yield the fields their meed of golden grain,
> And still the sky is jessamined with stars.

But is there any purpose in all those long 'ee's in the third line?

Some began well and ended poorly. Thus Caroline L'Anson falls flat in the last verse of "The Bequest" which, for the first four verses, is a moving description of an obviously profound experience. In "The Lovers" Michael Redgrove makes a gallant attempt at a series of triplets with a

10-6-10 metre, and may soon be in the winning class. A few at least had deep emotion to express, and Evelyn Atkinson's "Any Wife," though a "hate" poem rather than a "love" poem, described a universal experience in verse which is none the less sound for being "free." Imagery, on the whole, though we are far from holding that it is essential in even the greatest poetry, is almost lacking in these entries. The extravagance of Elizabeth Rigden's opening lines in "The Miracle" therefore deserves quotation.

Out of all space and time
Our lips have met.
For this, moment sublime,
Suns rose and set
Through countless ages . . .

Here is the right sort of immodesty, and love that is not powerful enough to set the Thames on fire and to burn it to ashes while you wait is, by the ordinary standards of "love," poor stuff. Of the higher ranges of this admirable quality we here find nothing.

Who, then, in such a disappointing array of entries, shall carry off the prize? After much consideration we have awarded the £10 as follows: Joint first, at £3 each, E. J. Barton of Doncaster for "For Eurydice" and Lucy Rochelle of Rotherham for "I hear you singing." Joint second, at £2 each, W. R. Latham for "Torment" and Jenefer Carlyon for "Be with me now." As a close runner-up we mention "The Empty Room" by Michael Jones of the R.A.F., Egypt.

It is impossible to give full reasons for my choice, but the winners appealed for their firmness of attack, to borrow a musical phrase, and the precision of thought and feeling enshrined in a well-wrought set of verses which characterise them all. Add to these qualities the perfume of sheer poetry, and you have what all examiners are forever seeking. The "firsts" are better than the "seconds," in our judgment, by virtue of a slightly enhanced standard of inspiration. They seem to belong, on reading all four poems again and again, to a somewhat higher plane of production. I commend a study of them to the less fortunate, though in our view none of them is great poetry.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS

Highly Commended

Evelyn Atkinson, Easington.
Dorothy Spring, Sheffield.
J. T. Brockway, The Hague.
Lt. John Pope, Chatham.

Commended

Diana M. Moore, Berlin.
Stefanie Fone, Hatch End.
Mary Savidge, Bury St. Edmunds
Nancy Pollok, Tettenhall.
Ursula Hopkins, Hampstead.
Capt. H. H. Greet, St. Albans.
Celia Randall, Holywood, Co. Down
Michael Redgrove, London, W.9.

FOR EURYDICE

The slow, bright hour flickers to dusk and dies,
Moths beat their wings on windows and await
With fluttering impatience the warm fate
Of lighted lamps; a little, chill wind sighs
Around the barren garden; the white flame
Of moonlight gropes among the withered leaves
Of fruitless trees; a sleepless bird, that grieves
With me for long dead summers, sings your name.
The hot stars pierce the night with sudden knives
Of lustful envy for the glowing song
Your name has kindled on the silent floes
Of desolation; soon the new day drives
the darkness westward; dawn will not be long;
The blackened bush of death has grown a rose.

E. J. Barton

I HEAR YOU SINGING

I hear you singing on the shores of sleep,
"Lover, the wind is fair. O come tonight
Over the shadowy tides of this immense
Unquiet ocean. Learn my love again;
Death cannot take it twice. Forget despair
And seek my heart beyond the bounds of sense."

Love, I embark. But my rebellious flesh
Defies my will, cries out, "You cheated me!
Give me my rights, my ancient certainties!"
Then the dread storms arise, the waves of grief
Break over me and hurl me from my course
And drown me in unfathomable seas.

Lucy Rochelle

TORMENT

Your tantalising beauty mocks my need
With smiling promises of cool delight,
That give no comfort to the burning night
In which my tortured passions cry and bleed.
Your kindness, honeyed wafers, cannot feed
This lust of longing against which I fight,

Striving in vain between the left and right
Of hate and love to hold the middle creed.

For God's sake be more bitter and less kind,
Or let your kindness kindle to a flame
That leaps and roars to mingle with my own,
For in this temperate friendship I can find
No peace to challenge my extravagant claim
To knit with mine your spirit, flesh and bone.

W. R. LATHAM

"BE WITH ME NOW"

Be with me now,
as these moon candles are,
faint lit in a hyacinth sky—
Let me feel the hesitant touch
of your love-shaken lips,
as a star
shivering through evening's eye.

Be with me now,
as these raven smooth seas
ghosting the midnight rock—
Just once
may you understand
and let these tideless thoughts break
in your gentle hands.

Be with me now,
as these fitful clouds are
lost in bewilderments of flight—
Let me hold
the beauty of your abandoned self
until reality becomes my dream,
and as morning whispers back to night
your arms may fold us out of time.

JENEFER CARLYON

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Annual General Business Meeting of the Poetry Society (Incorporated) will be held at the offices of the Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, on Wednesday, May 12th, 1948, at 3.30 p.m.*, to receive the annual financial statement, and elect the general members of the General Council. Names of delegates representing Centres should be sent to the General Secretary not later than April 12th, together with names of the Centre representatives on the General Council.

Admission will be made upon production of membership cards.

Any member who wishes to bring any business before the Annual Meeting must give twenty-eight days' written notice thereof to the General Secretary. Nominations for membership to the General Council must be made by two members of the General Council or three unattached members twenty-eight days prior to the Meeting.

Any member wishing to inspect the audited Statement of Account before the General Business Meeting may do so at this office between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Saturdays excepted), or may have a copy sent on application enclosing a stamped addressed envelope after April 30th.

By order of the Council, January 1st, 1948.

*NOTE.—In view of the fact that the Poetry Society's Luncheon (see below) is to be held on the day of the Annual General Meeting it has been decided to change the time of the meeting from 3 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

POETRY SOCIETY LUNCHEON

A Luncheon will be held at the

DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, W.1

on WEDNESDAY, MAY 12th, at 1 p.m.

in honour of the President of the Poetry Society, Lord David Cecil

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TICKETS, price **17/6** each

are available from The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1

The Poetry Society's Auditions and Examinations

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines continually increases. In 1946 a record was established both in the number of auditions held and the number of entrants heard therein.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions have recently been revised. Copies may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges or private individuals. Applications for audition dates should be made as long as possible beforehand.

The Poetry Hour at 33 Portman Square, W.1

Readings, recitals or lectures on poetry are held weekly at 33 Portman Square, London W.1. The following programme has been arranged.

Friday, April 23rd at 3 p.m. *Packed Poetry*—A Lecture by Vivian Burbury.

Friday, April 30th at 8 p.m. Leonard Clark and Iris Allam—*A Selection of Leonard Clark's poetry.*

Friday, May 7th at 8 p.m. John Bayliss—*The Silver Witch.*

Friday, May 14th at 8 p.m. Mary Winter-Were—*Poems by B. R. Gibbs, Carla Lanyon-Lanyon and Mary Winter-Were.*

Friday, May 21st at 3 p.m. Kelty Macleod—*A Programme of Ballads.*

Friday, May 28th at 8 p.m.—Poetry Brains Trust.*

Friday, June 4th at 8 p.m. Mr. Musgrove Horner—*Imageries of Dreams.*

Friday, June 11th at 8 p.m. Captain J. H. F. McEwen—*A Selection of his Poems.*

* Questions are invited to be sent to The Questionmaster, 33 Portman Square, W.1, before Monday, May 24th.

Please note that for the convenience of the majority of members, who cannot attend afternoon meetings, every fourth meeting is now to be held at this time, the three consecutive meetings to be held at 8 p.m. After Friday, 16th April, readings normally held at 5 p.m. will take place at 3 p.m.

Submissions to the Editor

Manuscripts may be submitted to the Editor, The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London W.1, for consideration in the ordinary way apart from entries for competitions. Such MSS. should be typewritten, or if this is impossible, printed legibly, and if their return is desired should

be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. The Editor can accept no responsibility for the safety of MSS. although every care will be taken to ensure this. Acceptance will not imply immediate publication; payment will be made upon publication.

The Poetry Society's Critical Service

This service continues to grow in popularity but it has been found necessary to amend slightly the terms upon which it is available to members. A minimum fee of 5s. will be charged in future and two poems only may be submitted for this sum. Additional poems will cost 2s. each for criticism and it is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed as this is as much in the author's interest as in the critic's.

The Premium Competition

The above competition continues as before with the offer of £10 in prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. There is no entrance fee, but competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped and addressed envelope will be required. See Rule 3.
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none will be returned in future.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition," The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address and the words "For Premium Competition closing ———— 1st."
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to The Poetry Review.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.

The closing dates for the six Premium Competitions for 1948 will be until further notice, April 1st, June 1st, August 1st, October 1st and December 1st.

The Greenwood Prize for 1948

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for 1948 for the best single poem in open competition. Entries should be addressed "The Greenwood Prize," 33 Portman Square, London W.1. and must be received before July 31st. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and

address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed. (If a non-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym.) The winning poem will be printed in THE POETRY REVIEW and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editor, who may reserve near winners for publication in THE POETRY REVIEW.

THE LOVE LYRIC COMPETITION FOR 1948

This annual competition offers £10 for an original love lyric. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. Not more than two poems may be entered by each competitor.
2. The length of an entry must not exceed thirty lines.
3. Entries must be typewritten, bear the name and address of the author and be addressed "Love Lyric Competition."
4. The Competition will close on 31st December, 1948.
5. The Editor reserves the right to publish any poem submitted, in THE POETRY REVIEW, but without prejudice to the author's right of publication elsewhere later.
6. Competitors must be members of the Poetry Society.
7. If competitors wish their entries returned will they please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET COMPETITION

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of instituting an annual competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet upon any subject.

It seems fitting that in this competition he who stood for form and the classic-necessity in the writing of a sonnet should dictate the framework to be used. And so accordingly the two forms on which he insisted so unsparingly are alone open for admission:

For the Octave—1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 2, 2, 1.
For the Sextet—3, 4, 5: 3, 4, 5: or 3, 4: 3, 4: 3, 4.

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator; the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in the October issue of THE POETRY REVIEW in commemoration of Lord Alfred's birthday, October 22nd. Competitors must not submit more than two sonnets by June 30th, 1948. Address: "Sonnet," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London W.1.

Poems of Place Competition

Mrs. A. Dorothy Holmes, a Shropshire member of The Poetry Society, offers £10 annually in competition for poems of place. Competitors, who must be members of The Poetry Society, may submit not more than two poems.

Less than a hundred lines should suffice. All entries for the 1948 competition must be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author, and must be addressed to "The Holmes Prize," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, not later than April 1st. The judges may divide the prize money into three parts at their discretion. All entries shall remain at the disposal of the adjudicators until the award is published, and the winning poems and any other specially mentioned entries may be published in The Poetry Review If competitors wish their entries returned will they please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

A Scots Poetry Competition

Mr. William Hutcheson, C.E., one of the soldier poets of the 17th Highland Light Infantry in the 1914-18 war, who subsequently published a collection of modern Scots verse, *Chota Chants,* has provided us with three consecutive premiums of £5 each for the encouragement and recognition of Scots poets of to-day. The third £5 is now on offer for poems addressed "Doric, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1." and received not later than November 1st, 1948. There should be not more than two entries from each competitor. Archaic and abstruse words should be avoided; if a stiff Doric term is used, it should be essential and virile and easily understood from the context. The poems should have a Scots flavour.

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CENTRE OF THE POETRY SOCIETY

Programme, 1948

Reading by members—unless otherwise stated—at the following addresses:—

May 8th at 2.45 p.m. A talk on Christina Rossetti, by Dorothy Margaret Stuart, with readings of D. M. Stuart's poems. Mrs. Theodora Roscoe, Hornhill Court, Chalfont St. Peter.

June 12th at 2.45 p.m. *Characters and Portraits.* Mrs. E. Ward, Kynance, Manor Road, Penn.

July 10th at 2.45 p.m. *Alice Meynell and Francis Thompson.* Mrs. H. E. Langston, Merlewood, Stratton Road, Beaconsfield.

September 11th at 3 p.m. *Animals.* Miss E. D. Bangay, Tilehurst Cottage, Hemel Hempstead Road, Chesham.

*October 9th at 3 p.m. Cathleen Nesbitt reading poems of her own selection. St. Bernard's Convent, High Wycombe.

November 13th at 2.45 p.m. Shakespeare's *Cymbeline.* Mrs. E. Van den Bergh, Beacon View, Penn.

December 11th at 3 p.m. Members' own choice of poems by living authors. British Legion, Tylers Green.

**February 14th and October 9th. These meetings are open to the public.*

Birthplace of Sir Philip Sidney

Lord de L'Isle and Dudley, V.C., will open the State Rooms at Penshurst Place, (birthplace of Sir Philip Sidney). *Each Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday* from 27th March—23rd October, 1948, also on 29th March, Bank Holiday; 17th May, Bank Holiday; 2nd August, Bank Holiday, *from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.* Qualified Guides in attendance.

Admission Charge 2s. 6d.; Children 1s. 6d. payable at the entrance.

On Wednesdays Visitors to the State Rooms will also be admitted to the Formal Gardens at a charge of 1s. Further details can be obtained on application to the Secretary, Penshurst Place, Nr. Tonbridge, Kent.

A SPECIAL PRIZE FOR SPOKEN ENGLISH

TO BE AWARDED ANNUALLY TO SELECTED CHILDREN FROM SCHOOLS IN CHELSEA AND KENSINGTON

The object of this prize is to encourage the appreciation of poetry amongst London school children, and promote a good standard of spoken English. The prize is to consist of a Book selected by the President and Committee of the Chelsea Poetry Circle.

For further particulars of the above Competition please apply to John E. Carroll, Hon. Secretary, 5 Redesdale Street, Chelsea, S.W.3.

An Arnold Vincent Bowen Society has been formed which will meet at 30 Curzon Road, Birkenhead, on Sunday evenings at 8.15 p.m.

Membership is open to all who shared with Arnold Vincent Bowen an enthusiasm for fellowship in music and poetry, and to their friends. Members will be asked to discuss work read at the meetings, to contribute items for discussion gathered from their own reading, and to contribute original work if they so desire.

The Society will be affiliated to the Poetry Society and to the Saturdays Poetry writing club, of which Arnold was one of our founder members in 1944.

It has been suggested by some members of the Poetry Society that a presentation fund be started on the occasion of the retirement of Mr. Galloway Kyle, formerly Director of the Poetry Society and Editor of this journal. The following subscribers to the fund are acknowledged :—

Mr. Howard Parsons; Mr. P. E. A. Leaver; Miss Rose Fee; Miss Ivy Smithson; Miss Nell Farleigh; Miss Curle; Mrs. Lucy Bredin; Miss Vassie, Mr. Creasey, Dr. Sackville Martin, Miss Bangay, Mr. Shorthose, Dr. J. Douglas Webster, Miss R. Shuttleworth, Mrs. T. L. Adamson, Mr. T. W. Ramsey, Mr. Hedley Lucas, Mrs. Cohen; Miss R. Cohen; Mr. A. S. Swinhoe; Mrs. F. L. Jones; Miss I. Bell; Mr. Robert Walker; Miss R. Mckie; Miss F. Bradford; Mr. Denis Turner; Mrs. B. G. Brooks; Miss Beatrice Rose; Mrs. Kathleen Lack; Miss Gordon Smythies; Miss M. E. Riley; Miss Bristowe; Miss U. M. Pye; Mrs. A. Hughes; Mrs. M. A. Richards; Mr. M. E. Mason; Miss R. C. Thomas; The Marist Sisters; Miss E. Dobell; Miss A. Balthazar; Mr. W. K. Seymour; Mrs. E. A. Jameson; Mr. J. E. Mullins; Miss I. Ormsby; Mrs. C. H. Phillips; Miss V. Baillieu; Miss Rita Milner.

Will members who would like to contribute to the fund please communicate with the General Secretary, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.